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# LENIN

By  
LEON TROTZKY

Trotsky, Lev, 1879-1940

*Authorized Translation*



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## INTRODUCTION

For American readers a correlation of the events and personalities which are the subject matter of these pages will disclose in a clearer light the contribution which Trotzky makes to the secret history of the Russian revolutionary movement. It is worth while to remember that only a comparatively few men are or have been able to offer comprehensive contributions to that secret history, and one of them is Trotzky. From the nature of the steps taken in the period of agitation and plotting which preceded the overthrow of Czarism and the subsequent triumph of Bolshevism, concealment was all important, and the full purposes of the leaders were known only to a small inner circle.

Writers, speakers, plotters, shrinking into the shadows when the need of self-preservation came, moved like figures in a fog, onward toward a goal which, beyond the general purpose of uprooting the imperial régime, was still indeterminate. Their names were unknown, or scarcely known, or were changed on occasion to deceive the Czar's secret police.

[ v ]



## INTRODUCTION

In this obscure background, what brought Lenin and Trotzky together in an association which meant so much? The author begins his book with a reminiscent account of their first meeting, which is intended to throw light primarily upon the character of Lenin, but which reveals his own aims and methods with a touch scarcely less intimate. These men, unknown to each other, markedly different in origin and early environment, had started by a common impulse along the same road and their paths happened to converge for the first time in 1902. Trotzky, born at Kherson in 1877, the son of a Jewish chemist named Bronstein, was expelled from school for the reason, it is said, that he desecrated an ikon, and he early developed irrepressible radical tendencies. At the age of 22 years he joined in a revolutionary plot at Odessa and was banished to Siberia, but escaped at the end of three years with his ardor unchilled by his stay in the frozen region of the Lena.

While in exile he read with avidity smuggled copies of "Iskra" (the spark), a journal published under Lenin's direction, with its companion "theoretical" magazine, "Saria" (Dawn), circulated from London and Geneva. After his escape he worked secretly in Russia for a short time, eluding the carefully spread net of the police,

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forming circles for aiding the subversive propaganda of "Iskra." In the autumn of 1902 he went to London, where he obtained a coveted place on the staff of that paper after a preliminary quizzing by the mysterious chief of the organization.

Trotsky, then but an eager fledgling in the revolutionary cause, discloses something of the awe with which he looked upon Lenin, who had already written "The Development of Capitalism in Russia" and was in the prime of his powers. Lenin (Vladimir Ilyitch Ulyanov) had the advantages that came from a fuller educational and social background. His father was a school superintendent at Simbirsk, where he was born, and had the bourgeois title of State Councilor. The son was reared in the Orthodox Church, studied at the Universities of Kazan and St. Petersburg, and prepared himself to become a lawyer, but his radical inclinations drew him away from that career. His brother was hanged in 1887 for taking part in a plot to murder Alexander III.

In 1895 Lenin organized a "Union for the Liberation of the Working Class" and was promptly exiled. After his term in Siberia had expired, he went abroad, embittered and resolute, to devote himself to leadership in behalf of revolution. He was absent from Russia almost continuously from that time until a month after the spring re-



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volt in 1917 spread before him the vision which he had cherished in years of penury and wandering.

The staff of "Iskra" was near a break-up when Trotzky joined it. He had been associated with Lenin less than a year when the factions in the Russian Socialist Party, ever ready for controversy, girded themselves for the "split of 1903." The party's Congress held in Switzerland in that year definitely separated into Bolsheviki and Mensheviki, and Trotzky could bring himself at first to espouse neither side. He was for steering a middle course and formed a small party of his own, which took him away from Lenin, who considered his course opportunistic.

The revolution of 1905 brought them together again, but only for a short time. During that outbreak, the forerunner of the convulsion of 1917, Lenin edited a radical paper in St. Petersburg. Trotzky was president of the Council of Workmen in the same city and was exiled again, this time for life. He escaped in six months and abandoned his name of Bronstein, taking that of a guard named Trotzky. Fleeing abroad, he agitated in France, Switzerland, Austria and Germany, writing constantly for radical papers.

Lenin, apart from Trotzky, pursued the fixed course which he had set for himself, never giving

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up his belief that an overturn which would facilitate his purposes was at hand. He had full confidence in his own methods and was mistrustful of men whom he suspected of a timidity which he regarded as fatal to the revolutionary cause.

At the outbreak of the World War in 1914, Lenin was in Galicia, where he had found a convenient base for fomenting discontent in Russia. He was arrested but released, and transferred his operations to Switzerland, where he continued them until 1917.

Trotsky, who was the editor of a Jewish newspaper in Berlin in 1914, was banished from Germany as a "dangerous anarchist." He took refuge first in Vienna and then in Zurich and Paris. Expelled from France, jailed in Spain, he decided to sail for the United States, and in New York began a new career along the old lines, writing for Jewish and Russian papers and speaking at meetings of radicals. He had often tasted poverty and in the Bronx, where he lived with his wife and two sons, he was reduced to such straits that only with the help of friends was he able to sustain his family.

Then came the amazing transformation of 1917. The impoverished exile of the Bronx, writing ceaselessly and fiercely against the war, became in less than two years the negotiator of the treaty of

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Brest-Litovsk, which took Russia out of the war. He sailed from New York March 27, 1917, after about a year in America, and, though detained by the British at Halifax, he was released at the intercession of the Kerensky government, and contrived finally to reach Russia.

Meanwhile, with little loss of time, Lenin had been whirled across Germany from Switzerland with the consent of the Kaiser's general staff, which he was willing to use (as he explained fully later) in the pursuit of his object, and in Petrograd fate again brought him in contact with the one-time neophyte of "Iskra." Here was the culmination and blending of their careers. Now they were in full agreement. The ambitions dimly sensed in years of hiding, hoping, striving, came to fruition. Once more, as in their life in London, they were collaborators, but now in the realm of deeds rather than of words.

Yet for both it was allotted to taste the bitterness as well as the sweetness of the fruit for which during all those years they had been reaching. Bullets fired by Dora Kaplan, a revolutionist whom the extreme measures of the Bolsheviki had roused to fury, brought Lenin to depths of pain and weakness at the perihelion of his power. Although he recovered temporarily, the shock robbed him of some of his physical resistance and

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made him prey to the disease which cost his life. In the high tide of Communist experimentation which he had so ardently desired, he was forced to admit that he had gone too fast and compelled to sound his "economic retreat"—a concession to the institutions of capitalism which was defended as a measure of expediency in the shadow of famine and industrial paralysis.

When he died, and received posthumous honors as the titular leader and visible embodiment of the Communist creed, the ends for which he had striven, to bring Russia into a prosperous condition under the régime of the proletariat, and to act as leaders in a world-wide revolution, were still far short of fulfillment.

Trotsky was left, the second of the duumvirate of defiant iconoclasm and resistance to the forces of "bourgeois" society, the war minister of Soviet Russia, the man of action in a régime of theory. Was the personal tragedy of Lenin only for Lenin, and was his fiery, restless associate to be spared to enjoy triumph alone? Were pæans of Communist gratitude bestowed upon Lenin dead to be continued for Trotsky living?

Only a few months passed after Lenin's death before Trotsky, whose hand was supposed to be powerful enough to call millions in arms to assist him, felt the subtle entanglements of the intrigue

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and rivalry which are the inevitable accompaniments of a change of order. His prestige fell away from him and at last, deposed from office as war minister, no weapon was left to him more deadly than his pen with which to combat the multitude of enemies around him.

Trotsky may have written too much, if only his personal fortunes be considered, but not too much for history. His estimate of Lenin now given reveals frankly the course of their relations in some of the most significant periods of the Communist struggle for the remaking of Russia—indeed, for the remaking of the fabric of the civilized world of which they had both dreamed in the exuberance of a zeal which set no limit to hopes.

Beginning with their days together as writers for the old "Iskra," he gives a picture of the shrewd, cautious, thoughtful Lenin, gentle in many of his personal relations, jocular at times, but sternly impatient of opposition, bent upon the attainment of his ends at any cost, even at the cost of blood. Vera Ivanovna Sasulich, one of the band in London, said to Lenin: "George (Plechankof) is a greyhound. He shakes and shakes his adversary and lets him go, but you are a bulldog; you have a deadly bite." Lenin liked this view of himself. He showed (on a "small scale" then) the "persistent, stubborn directness of pur-



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pose, that made use of all circumstances, stopped at no formality and was the characteristic of Lenin as a leader." Lenin was the "political guide" of Iskra. He "forced himself into tomorrow in his thoughts," and, of the group in London "he alone," Trotzky writes, "represented the coming day."

This was the younger Lenin, his traits, his intellectual scope, already marked clearly. Trotzky enlarges upon the development of these traits in Petrograd in the fateful days of October, 1917, and afterward. Lenin was for seizing power without equivocation. "Nothing was so repugnant" to him as "the slightest suspicion of sentimentality." Yet he was impatient of hasty, ill-prepared steps, and admitted that blunders were made in the Bolshevik tactics.

He disagreed with some of his colleagues and Trotzky does not hesitate to set down these disagreements, the revelation of which has been the principal cause of the war minister's fall. In Trotzky's opinion, Lenin "overestimated the sagacity and resolution of the enemy." When at last power was in their hands, Lenin turned to international revolutionary action. Always he was for warfare on the existing order.

As Trotzky writes, in a style characteristically fervid, his recollections and impressions of Lenin, they thus cover four stages: first, the period of

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preparation for the revolution when the elements of discontent in Russia, to which the war with Japan and the World War gave unexpected growth, were nursed into proportions as truly national as anything in Russia can be; second, the time when the Bolshevik program for seizing power was being formulated and executed; third, the era of Bolshevik supremacy, with its disclosure of mistakes in the estimation of eventualities, especially the mistake of counting upon a world-wide revolution; and fourth, the period of the passing of Lenin, with the view of his rôle as it appears in the long perspective to his chief lieutenant.

Trotsky may be questioned as to facts; his conclusions may be assailed; but there is no doubt of the value of his testimony as to the manner of man who dominated Russia during the first years when the repressive force of Czarism was removed from the organic structure of that strange political patchwork which until March, 1917, was called the Russian Empire.

*The Publishers*



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## FOREWORD

**T**HIS book is not complete and there are two reasons for this. Above all things one must not look in it for a biography or character study of Lenin or a complete exposition of his views or methods of action. This work offers only some sketches, fragments, outlines for future work of others, possibly also for a book by the author of these lines. This "sketchy" method is in the meantime inevitable and necessary. Besides the popular biographies and general character studies, there is already need of a more detailed and careful work in order to keep in touch with the particular episodes, the particular features of Lenin's life and personality as they occurred before our eyes. The most important part of this book consists of the author's recollections of two periods between which lie fifteen years: the last half year of the old "Iskra," and the decisive year in the middle of which the October Revolution occurred, that is, from about the middle of 1917 to the autumn of 1918.

But this book has not been finished for another, simpler reason: I hope that circumstances will

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permit me to do further work on it, to make improvements and corrections, to put it into more precise form, and complete it by new episodes and chapters. Illness and the consequent temporary withdrawal from active work gave me the opportunity to live over again in memory much that is told in this book. When I read the first fragments I unrolled the coil of memory further and recalled new episodes that are significant solely because they refer to Lenin's life or are connected with him. But this method of work involves the disadvantage that the product of the work is never finished. For this reason then I decided to cut short the manuscript mechanically, at a definite moment. At the same time I reserve the privilege—as I have already said—of working further on this book. I need not say that I shall be most grateful to all concerned in the events and episodes of the time described if they will inform me of any corrections, or add any recollections.

On the other hand, it is not superfluous to say in advance that I have purposely omitted a number of circumstances that are still too closely bound up with the events of the day.

To the two main parts of the book that are in the form of memoirs I add those articles and speeches, or parts of speeches, in which I wished to characterize Lenin.

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In my work on these recollections I have used scarcely any material dealing with the time pictured. This seemed to me best, as I did not set myself the task of presenting a complete historical sketch of Lenin's life, but only wished to offer material from the original source, in this case the author, by depending only on my own memory.

After this work had been written in the main, I read Volume XIV of Lenin's works, and Comrade Ovsjannikof's little book about the Brest-Litovsk peace, and made some additions to my work. But they were very few.

L. TROTSKY

P. S. On reading over what I had written I found that I had called Leningrad in my recollections either Petrograd or Petersburg, while many other comrades call the Petrograd of old times Leningrad. This seems to me wrong. Can one say, for example: Lenin was imprisoned in Leningrad? It is clear that Lenin could not be imprisoned in Leningrad. Still less can one say: Peter I founded Leningrad. Perhaps in the course of years or decades the new name of the city—as all proper names in general—will lose its actual historical meaning. But for the present we still feel too clearly and acutely that Petrograd is called Leningrad only since the 21st of January, 1924,

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and could not be called so before. Therefore in these recollections of Leningrad I keep to the name by which it was known in the time of the events described.

21st April, 1924

L. T.

## Lenin and the Old "Iskra"





# LENIN

## LENIN AND THE OLD "ISKRA"

*"The split of 1903 was, so to speak, an anticipation . . ."*  
(Lenin's words in a speech in 1910.)

UNDOUBTEDLY the period of the old "Iskra" (1900 to 1903) will be of exceptional psychological interest to the future great biographer of Lenin, but at the same time will present great difficulties: for in just these short years Lenin was precisely Lenin. That does not mean that he did not grow more. On the contrary he grew—and in what proportions!—just as much before "October" as after October. But it is a more organic growth. Great indeed was the leap from illegality to power on October 25th, 1917; but this was the outward so-called material leap of a man who had weighed and measured all that a man can weigh and measure. But in the growth that preceded the split at the Second Party Congress lies an inner leap, imperceptible to the outer eye, but so much the more definite.

These recollections offer the future biographer

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material about this extraordinarily noteworthy and significant period in the mental development of Vladimir Ilyich. From that time to the moment these lines were written more than two decades have passed, and decades moreover that are an unusual burden to human memory. That may evoke the natural anxiety as to what degree what is told here presents correctly the events of the past. I confess that I am not free from this anxiety myself and shall not be so long as I am at work at this book; besides, there are more than enough of incorrect recollections and inexact testimony! While writing this sketch I had no documents, memoranda, nor material of any kind at hand. However, I believe this was an advantage. I had to depend entirely on my memory and hope that its independent work in these conditions is spared from involuntary retrospective touchings-up that are so difficult to avoid even in the most critical self-examination. The future investigator too will find the work easier when he takes up this book after he has had in his hand the documents and all the material connected with this period.

In some places I present the conversations and discussions of the time in dialogue form. As a matter of course, after more than two decades, one can scarcely claim to give an exact repetition of the dialogues. But I believe that I present the

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substance of them correctly and many particularly impressive expressions word for word.

As it is a question of material for a life of Lenin, consequently a matter of exceeding importance, I may be permitted to say a few words about certain peculiarities of my faculty of remembrance. I have a very bad memory for the topography of cities and even of houses. In London, for example, I have lost my way more than once on the comparatively short stretch between Lenin's home and my own. For a long time I had a very bad memory for faces but in this respect I have made important progress. But I used to have, and still have today, a particularly good memory for ideas, their combination, and for conversations about ideological themes. I could often prove that this estimation is not subjective: other people, who heard the same conversations as I, often repeated them less accurately than I and acknowledged my corrections to be right. Moreover, I had come to London as a young provincial with the most ardent desire to understand everything as quickly as possible. Therefore it is natural if the conversations with Lenin and the other members of the "Iskra" staff are firmly impressed on my memory. These are considerations that the biographer cannot disregard in estimating the trustworthiness of the recollections that follow.

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I arrived in London in the autumn of 1902. It must have been in October and early in the morning. A cab that I engaged because I saw others doing so took me to an address jotted down on a scrap of paper, my destination. This was Vladimir Ilyich's home. Before this (it must have been in Zurich) I had been taught to knock at a door in a certain definite way. As far as I remember Nadezda Constantinovna opened the door for me; I had gotten her out of bed with my knocking, as one can imagine. It was early in the morning, and any sensible man, more familiar with the ordinary conventions of life, would have waited an hour or two at the station, instead of knocking at strange doors at dawn. But I was still completely under the influence of my flight from Vercholensk.<sup>1</sup> I had already roused Axelrod's household in Zurich in the same way, only not at dawn but in the middle of the night.

Vladimir Ilyich was still in bed and he greeted me with justifiable surprise. Under such conditions our first meeting and our first conversation took place. Vladimir Ilyich and Nadezda Constantinovna knew me already through a letter from Claire (M. G. Krchichanovsky), who had officially introduced me in Samara to the organi-

<sup>1</sup>The district on the upper Lena to which Trotzky had been banished.

zation of "Iskra" under the name of "Pen." So I was greeted thus: "Hello, 'Pen' has come. . . ."

They gave me tea in the kitchen, I believe. In the meantime Lenin dressed. I told them about my flight and complained about the bad condition of "Iskra's" frontier organization: it was in the hands of a social revolutionary grammar-school teacher who was not in great sympathy with the "Iskra" people on account of a highly inflamed polemic; besides the smugglers had plundered me mercilessly and had raised all the tariffs and rates.<sup>2</sup>

I gave to Nadezda Constantinovna my modest pack of addresses and news or, to be more exact, data about the necessary liquidation of some useless publications. By order of the Samara group (Claire and others) I had visited Kharkof, Poltava, and Kief and had to establish everywhere, at any rate in Kharkof and Poltava, very weak organizing connections.

I no longer remember whether it was this morning or another day that I took a long walk with Vladimir Ilyich through London. He showed me Westminster Abbey (from outside) and some other famous buildings. I no longer know how he expressed himself but the meaning was: that is "*their* famous Westminster." The "*their*"

<sup>2</sup>For the illegal forwarding of "Iskra" to Russia.—*Translator.*



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meant, naturally, not the English, but the enemy. Not emphatic at all, rather deeply organic and revealed by the pitch of his voice, this meaning was always obvious when he spoke of any kind of cultural values or new conquests, whether it were about the edification of the British Museum or the richness of information of the "Times" or, many years later, German artillery or French aviation: *They* understand or *they* have, *they* have accomplished or succeeded—but always as enemies! The invisible shadow of the shareholders of society lay, as it were, in his eyes on all human culture, and this shadow he felt as incontestably as the daylight.

As far as I remember I paid little attention then to the architecture of London. Transported from Vercholensk abroad for the very first time, I accepted Vienna, Paris, and London rather summarily, and did not care for "details" such as Westminster. And naturally Vladimir Ilyich had not invited me to take that long walk for that reason. His purpose was to get to know me and examine me. And the examination in reality covered "the whole course." In answer to his questions I gave him details of exile on the Lena and its inner groupings. The attitude towards active political struggle, to the central organiza-



tion and to the terror, formed the chief line of division at that time.

"Well, but were there not differences of opinion in connection with Bernstein's policy?" asked Vladimir Ilyich.

I told him how we had read Bernstein's book and Kautsky's in the Moscow prison and then in exile. Not one of the Marxists among us raised his voice for Bernstein. We looked upon it as a matter of course, so to speak, that Kautsky was right. But we did not draw any lines of communication between the theoretical struggle that was developing on an international scale and our own organizing political discussions, did not even think of them, not at least before we had read on the *Lena* the first numbers of "Iskra" and Lenin's pamphlet: "What Is to Be Done?" I told him, moreover, how we had read with great interest Bogdanof's philosophical pamphlets and I remember very clearly the import of Vladimir Ilyich's remark: to him too the pamphlet about the historical way of contemplation of nature seemed very valuable, but Plechanof did not agree with it, and declared it was not materialistic. Vladimir Ilyich had then no views of his own about this question and only repeated Plechanof's opinion, with esteem for his philosophical author-

ity, but also with uneasiness. Plechanof's views amazed me then very much.

\ Lenin examined me also on economics. I told him how we had studied in common in the Moscow prison his book "The Development of Capitalism in Russia" and in exile were working through "Capital" but had stopped at the second volume. I mentioned the enormous amount of statistical material worked out in "The Development of Capitalism."

"In the Moscow prison we have often spoken with astonishment of this colossal work."

"Yes, indeed, it was not done all at once," Lenin answered.

It evidently pleased him that the young comrades studied carefully his most important economic work.

We spoke then of Michailisky's appearance, of the impression that he had made on us in exile and to which many succumbed. I told him that the first hectographed number of Michailisky that reached us "up there" on the Lena made a strong impression on the majority of us as a sharp critique of social democratic opportunism and in this sense corresponded with the train of thought aroused by the polemic between Kautsky and Bernstein. The second number in which Michailisky "tears away the mask" from the Marxist formulas of

reproduction and presents it as a theoretical justification of profit-sharing of the proletariat through the intelligence, aroused theoretical indignation in us. The third number, finally, which we received later, with its positive program in which the residue of economics is connected with the germ of syndicalism had the effect upon us of complete bankruptcy.

My further work was only touched upon in general in this conversation. I wanted to familiarize myself first of all with the literature that had appeared, and then I suggested going back to Russia illegally. It was decided that I should first "look round" a little.

Nadezda Constantinovna found me lodgings some distance away in the house where Sasulich, Martof and Blumenfeld lived, the latter the man who published "Iskra." There was a vacant room there for me. The house was of the usual English form of construction and did not spread out horizontally but vertically: on the lower floor the owner lived, and then came the tenants one above the other. The common room, that Plechanof had named "the den" on his first visit, was still free. Not without fault on the part of Vera Ivanovna Sasulich, but also not without Martof's assistance, great disorder reigned in this room. Here we

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drank coffee, had long talks here, smoked, etc. Hence the name.

Thus began the short London period of my life. I devoured hungrily the back numbers of "Iskra" and the pamphlets of "Saria"<sup>1</sup> (Dawn). At this time also I began my work on the "Iskra."

I wrote a short article on the 200 years jubilee of the Schlüsselburg fortress. I believe it was my first work for the "Iskra." The article closed with the words of Homer, or, to be exact, the words of Homer's translator, Gnedich. I quoted the "invincible hands" that the revolution was laying on Czarism. (On the journey from Siberia I had read the Iliad in the train.) The article pleased Lenin. But he had justifiable doubts about "invincible hands" and expressed them to me with goodnatured banter. "But that is a verse of Homer," I said to justify myself, but admitted gladly that the classical quotation was not necessary. The article is to be found in "Iskra," but without the "invincible hands."

I then went with my first reports to Whitechapel where I went about with the "old" Tchaikovsky (he was already an old man) and with the anarchist Tcherkesof, who was also no longer young. Finally I was genuinely astonished that

<sup>1</sup>"Saria" was the theoretical organ of the "Iskra" organization.—*Translator.*

well-known, gray-bearded exiles could utter such down-right nonsense. . . . London's "old citizen," Alexief, was the go-between with Whitechapel, an exile and Marxist, who was connected with the "Iskra." He initiated me into English life and was in general the source of all my knowledge. I remember that after a detailed conversation with him on the way to Whitechapel and back I told Vladimir Ilyich of two of Alexief's opinions. The one concerned the breaking up of the political régime in Russia, the other Kautsky's last pamphlet. "This breaking up will not come gradually," said Alexief, "but very abruptly, on account of the crudity of the autocracy." The word crudity (cruelty, severity, obstinacy) I noticed particularly.

"Well, he may be right," said Lenin when he had heard my story to the end.

Alexief's second declaration of opinion was about Kautsky's pamphlet: "The Day after the Social Revolution." I knew Lenin was much interested in the little book, that, in his own words, he had read it twice, and was reading it for the third time; I believe also that he edited the Russian translation. I had just studied the pamphlet carefully at Vladimir Ilyich's suggestion. Alexief thought the work opportunist.

"Blockhead," said Lenin unexpectedly, and



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puckered his lips angrily, which was always a sign of dissatisfaction in him.

Alexief himself had the greatest regard for Lenin: "I believe he is more important for the revolution than Plechanof." Naturally I said nothing about this to Lenin, but I told it to Martof. He made no reply.

The editorial staff of "Iskra" and "Saria" consisted of six persons: three "old" people, Plechanof, Sasulich, and Axelrod, and three young ones: Lenin, Martof, and Potresof. Plechanof and Axelrod lived in Switzerland, Sasulich in London with the young people. Potresof was then somewhere on the continent. This local separation involved many technical inconveniences which, however, did not trouble Lenin, but rather the contrary. Before my journey to the continent he initiated me cautiously in the internal relations of the staff and said that Plechanof urged the removal of the entire staff to Switzerland, but that he, Lenin, was opposed to it as it would make the work more difficult. Then I understood for the first time, but still quite dimly, that the staff's remaining in London did not depend only on police regulations but also on the organizing personnel.

In the organizing political work Lenin wanted to be as independent as possible of the old men, of

Plechanof above all, with whom he had already had sharp conflicts, especially in perfecting the draft of the party program. Sasulich and Martof were the mediators in such cases: Sasulich as Plechanof's second, Martof in the same position for Lenin. The two mediators were of a very forgiving nature and, besides, very friendly with each other. I only learned gradually of the sharp clashes between Lenin and Plechanof in the management of the theoretical part of the program. I remember that Vladimir Ilyich asked me what I thought of the program that had just appeared in "Iskra," in Number 25, I believe. I had, however, taken in the program too much as a whole to be able to answer the internal questions that interested Lenin. The differences of opinion concerned the policy of greater sharpness and exactitude in characterizing the chief tendencies of capitalism, the concentration of production, the disintegration of the intermediate ranks, the class differences, etc.—on Lenin's side, and on greater consideration of conditions and caution on the part of Plechanof.

The program, as is well known, abounds in the words "more or less": that is due to Plechanof. As far as I remember Martof's and Sasulich's accounts, Lenin's original draft, which he offered in contrast with Plechanof's, met with very



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sharp criticism on the part of the latter, in that haughty ironical tone that marked George Valentinovich in such cases. But Lenin was naturally neither intimidated nor discouraged by that. The struggle assumed a very dramatic form.

Vera Ivanovna said to Lenin, as she told the story: "George (Plechanof) is a greyhound. He shakes and shakes the adversary and lets him go, but you are a bulldog: you have a deadly bite."

I remember this sentence very exactly as also Sasulich's final remark: "That pleased him (Lenin) greatly. 'The deadly bite?' he repeated with delight." And Vera Ivanovna imitated good-naturedly the tone of the question.

During my stay in London Plechanof came for a short visit. I saw him then for the first time. He came to our common lodgings, was in the "den," too, but I was not at home.

"George has arrived," said Vera Ivanovna. "He wants to see you. Go to him."

"What George is that?" I asked in surprise, for I took for granted it was a famous name that I did not know.

"Plechanof . . . we call him George."

I went to him that evening. In the little room, besides Plechanof, sat the fairly well-known German writer and Social Democrat, Bar, and the Englishman Askew. As there were no more

chairs I did not know where I ought to sit down and Plechanof suggested—not without hesitation—that I sit on the bed. I found this quite natural, and had no idea that a European from head to toe like Plechanof resorted to such an unusual measure only in extreme necessity. The conversation was in German which Plechanof knew but slightly; so he limited himself to very short remarks. Bar spoke first of how the English bourgeoisie had understood how to ensnare the progressive workmen and then the conversation changed to the English forerunners of French materialism. Bar and Askew soon went away. George Valentinovich expected, and with reason, that I would go with them, as it was late, and in order not to disturb the landlady by talking. But I, on the contrary, was of the opinion that it was only really beginning now.

"Bar said some very interesting things," I said.

"Yes, what he said about English politics is interesting, but what he said about philosophy is nonsense," Plechanof answered.

When he saw that I made no preparations to go he suggested that we go to drink beer in the neighborhood. He asked me some casual questions and was gracious, but back of this graciousness was a tinge of hidden impatience. I felt that he was absent-minded. Possibly he was only tired from

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his day, but I went away with a dissatisfied and irritated feeling.

In the London period, as in Geneva later, I met Sasulich and Martof more frequently than Lenin. In London I lived in the same house with them, and in Geneva we generally ate dinner and supper in the same restaurant, so that I met Martof and Sasulich several times a day, while every encounter with Lenin, who lived with his family, with the exception of official meetings, was a little event.

Sasulich was a curious person and a curiously attractive one. She wrote very slowly and suffered actual tortures of creation. "Vera Ivanovna does not write, she puts mosaic together," Vladimir Ilyich said to me at that time. And in fact she put down each sentence separately, walked up and down the room slowly, shuffled about in her slippers, smoked constantly hand-made cigarettes and threw the stubs and half-smoked cigarettes in every direction on all the window seats and tables, and scattered ashes over her jacket, hands, manuscripts, tea in the glass, and incidentally her visitor. She remained to the end the old radical intellectual on whom fate grafted Marxism. Sasulich's articles show that she had adopted to a remarkable degree the theoretic elements of Marxism. But the moral political foundations of the Russian radicals of the '70's remained untouched in her

until her death. In intimate conversations she permitted herself to rail against recognized methods or deductions of Marxism. The idea "revolutionary" had for her an independent meaning, apart from its class purport. I recall a conversation with her about her "Revolutionaries from a Bourgeois Milieu." I used the expression *bourgeois democratic revolutionaries*. "But no," Vera Ivanovna interrupted with a touch of annoyance or rather of vexation. "Not bourgeois and not proletarian, but simply revolutionary. Naturally one can say *small bourgeois revolutionaries*," she added, if you attribute to the small bourgeoisie everything you cannot otherwise dispose of. . . ."

The ideological rallying-point of Social Democracy was then Germany and we followed with close attention the struggle of the orthodox with the revisionists in German Social Democracy. Vera Ivanovna did not do this, she even said: "It is always the same. They will also finish with revision, will restore Marx, obtain the majority and still get along with the Kaiser."

"Whom do you mean by 'they,' Vera Ivanovna?"

"The German Social Democrats."

In this connection Vera Ivanovna was not so wrong as it then seemed, even though everything took a different course and for different reasons than she thought. . . . Sasulich looked with

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skepticism at the program of the division of land; she did not turn it aside but she joked good-naturedly about it. I recall an episode of this kind. Shortly before the Congress Constantin Constantinovich Bauer came to Geneva. He was an old Marxist but an extremely unbalanced and changeable man who was friendly with Struve for a time and then hesitated between the "Iskra" and "Osvobochdenje"<sup>1</sup> (Liberation). In Geneva he began to turn towards the "Iskra" but he did not want to recognize the division of land. He went to Lenin, with whom he had evidently been acquainted in the past. He came away from him without having been convinced, no doubt because Vladimir Ilyich, who knew his Hamlet nature, had not taken the trouble to convince him. I had a long conversation with Bauer, whom I had known in exile, about the unlucky divisions of land. In the sweat of my brow I set forth all the arguments I had gathered together in six months of endless debates with Social Revolutionaries and all the other adversaries of the agrarian program of "Iskra." And actually, the evening of that very day, Martof (at least I believe it was he) told us at an editorial meeting at which I was present,

<sup>1</sup> The organ of "The Union of Liberation" to which Miluikof, Struve, and Propokovich belonged, who "first stood with one foot in the camp of Social Democracy and with the other in the camp of the Liberals." Sinovief: "History of the Communist Party," page 70.—*Translator.*



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that Bauer had come to him and had finally declared himself an "Iskraer." Trotzky had scattered all his doubts. . . .

"About the divisions too?" Sasulich asked frightened.

"Yes, especially that."

"The p-o-or fellow," Ivanovna exclaimed with such an inimitable expression that we all laughed in a friendly way.

"In Vera Ivanovna much is based on ethics and feeling," Lenin once said to me, and told me how she and Martof had been inclined to individual terror on account of the flogging by Wal, the governor of Vilna, of workmen who were making a demonstration. The traces of this temporary "tendency," as we then called it, can be found in one of the numbers of "Iskra." It seems to me the matter stands thus: Martof and Sasulich published the number in question without Lenin who was on the continent. The news of the floggings in Vilna reached London through a telegraph agency. In Vera Ivanovna there awoke the heroic radical who had shot at Trepof on account of the scourging of political prisoners. Martof supported her. When Lenin received the new number of "Iskra" he was greatly excited: "That is the first step towards capitulation to the social revolutionary doctrine." At the same time there

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came a letter of protest from Plechanof. This episode had occurred before my arrival in London and so my description may contain a few inaccuracies about the course of events but I remember very well the essence of the affair. "Naturally," Vera Ivanovna declared in a conversation with me, "it is not a question here of the terror, but of the system, and I believe that one can wean them away from scourging by the terror. . . ."

Sasulich could not carry on a real discussion, still less did she understand how to come forward openly. She never answered directly the arguments of her opponents, but pondered over them quietly until finally she burst forth in a whole train of sentences in which she turned, not to the one whom the reply concerned, but to the one she thought would understand her. When the debates were formal, with a president, Vera Ivanovna never entered the list of speakers, as, to say anything, she would have had to burst forth explosively. In such a case, she entirely ignored the list of speakers, treated them with absolute disrespect, interrupted constantly the speaker and the president, and said to the very end what she wanted to say. To understand her you had to follow her train of thought closely. And her thoughts were—whether they were false or right



—always interesting and exclusively her own. It is not difficult to imagine what a contrast, Vera Ivanovna, with her indefinite radicalism, her subjectivity, and her confusion presented to Vladimir Ilyich. Not only was there no sympathy between them but they had the feeling of deep organic difference. But as a clever psychologist Sasulich felt Lenin's force, perhaps also not without a touch of envy. She showed this also in her expression about the deadly bite.

The complicated relations that existed among the members of the staff were gradually made clear to me, but not without some difficulty. As I have already said I came to London a real provincial. This was true in every respect; at that time I had not only not been abroad, but had not been in Petersburg. In Moscow as well as in Kief I had only been in political prisons. The Marxist publicists I knew exclusively from their articles. In Siberia I had read a few numbers of "Iskra" and Lenin's "What Is to Be Done?" I had heard obscurely of Ilin, the author of "The Development of Capitalism" in the Moscow prison (I believe from Vanovsky) as the rising star of Social Democracy. I knew little of Martof, nothing of Potresof. In London I studied with zeal "Iskra" and "Saria" and especially what had happened abroad, and thus in one of the numbers of "Saria"

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I came upon a brilliant article aimed at Propokovich about the rôle and the meaning of the mining-companies unions.

"Who is this Molotof?" I asked Martof.

"Parvus."

But I knew nothing of Parvus. I accepted "Iskra" as a whole and in those months I had no desire, indeed I had even a kind of inner aversion, to look in it or its staff for any weakening tendencies, shades of feeling, influences, or similar things.

I recall that I noticed that many editorials and feuilletons in "Iskra" although not signed, contained the pronoun "I": "In such and such a number I said," "I have already written such and such a thing," etc. I asked who wrote these articles. It turned out that they were all by Lenin. In talking with him I remarked that I thought it wrong to use the pronoun "I" in unsigned articles. "Why wrong?" he asked interestedly, assuming that I was saying something here that was not casual and not only my personal opinion.

"Because it is," I answered vaguely, for I had no particular views about it.

"I don't think so," said Lenin and laughed ambiguously.

At that time one might have perceived a breath

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of "egotism" in this literary custom. In fact, however, the prominence given his articles, even when they were not signed, gives a strong position to his policy because of his mistrust of the firm policy of his nearest colleagues. Here we see already on a small scale that persistent, stubborn directness of purpose, that made use of all circumstances, stopped at no formality, and was the characteristic of Lenin as a leader.

Lenin was the political guide of "Iskra" but as a publicist Martof was its head. He wrote easily and unceasingly, exactly as he spoke. Lenin passed much time in the library of the British Museum, where he was busy with theoretical studies. I remember that Lenin wrote an article in the library against Nadjeschdin, who at that time had his own little publication in Switzerland, and chanced to be hesitating between the Social Democrats and the Social Revolutionaries. But the night before (he usually worked at night), Martof had already written a long article about Nadjeschdin and given it to Lenin.

"Have you read Julian's article?" Vladimir Ilyich asked me in the Museum.

"Yes, I have read it."

"What do you think of it?"

"I think it is good."

"Yes, it is very good, but not definite enough."

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The results are lacking. Here I have written out something, but I do not know yet what ought to be done with it; perhaps add it to Julian's article as a supplementary note."

He gave me a small sheet of paper written closely with pencil, and in the next number of "Iskra" Martof's article appeared with Lenin's note added. I do not know if this note is used in the collected works of Lenin. But I can vouch that he wrote it.

Some months later, it was in the weeks before the Congress, a new difference of opinion flared up in passing between Lenin and Martof and that about a tactical question in connection with the street demonstrations, that is, to be more exact, about the armed struggle with the police. Lenin said we must form small armed groups and instruct the workmen accustomed to fight to struggle with the police. Martof was against it. The strike reached the editorial office.

"Won't this cause something like a group terror?" I said in regard to Lenin's proposal. (I remember that at this time the struggle with the terrorist tactics of the Social Revolutionaries played a large rôle in our work.) Martof took up the discussion and developed the idea that we must give instructions to protect the mass demonstrations from the police, but without train-

ing separate groups to struggle with them. Plechanof, to whom the others and I looked expectantly, avoided the answer and suggested to Martof to put the resolution in writing so that we could consider the points of controversy with the text in hand. The episode, however, was swallowed up in the events connected with the Congress.

Not only in assemblies and meetings, but in private conversations, I had very little opportunity to observe Lenin and Martof together. Long discussions, formless conversations, which generally changed to exiles' chat and disputes, to which Martof was much inclined, Lenin did not care for at all. This most powerful machinist of the revolution, not only in politics but also in his theoretical works, in his philosophical and linguistic studies, was irrevocably controlled by one and the same idea, the goal. He was probably the most extreme utilitarian whom the laboratory of history has produced. But his utilitarianism was of the broadest historical scope. His personality did not grow flat or poor thereby, but on the contrary developed and enriched itself in extent, as his experience of life and sphere of activity grew. . . .

Side by side with Lenin, Martof, who was then his closest comrade in the struggle, did not feel very comfortable. They still used the familiar



"thou" but there was already a certain coolness noticeable in their relations. Martof lived far more for today, and its concerns, for the current literary work, publicist writings, polemics, for news and conversation. Lenin left today behind him and forced himself into tomorrow in his thoughts. Martof had numberless and often brilliant combinations, hypotheses, propositions, which he himself quickly forgot, while Lenin found what he needed and when he needed it. The venturesomeness and brittleness of Martof's thoughts made Lenin frequently shake his head in alarm. Any differences in the political policy were not yet fixed, and had not yet made their appearance; only subsequently they could be detected by intimations.

Later at the time of the split at the Second Congress the "Iskra" people were divided into *hard* and *soft*. This designation was naturally very useful at first, and demonstrates that when there was no exact line of division, the difference lay in comprehension, resolution, and readiness to go to the end. When we turn to the relations between Lenin and Martof it must be said that, before the split and before the Congress, Lenin was "hard" and Martof "soft." And both knew this. Lenin looked critically and almost mistrustfully at Martof, whom otherwise he valued very highly, and

Martof, who was conscious of that, felt oppressed and nervously shrugged his thin shoulders. When they talked with each other on meeting, the lack of the friendly tone and of any joking was noticeable, at least as far as I could see. When Lenin spoke he looked past Martof, and Martof's eyes on the other hand looked out rigidly from behind the drooping glasses that were never cleaned. Even when Vladimir Ilyich spoke with me about Martof his voice had a peculiar tinge: "Did Julian say that?" in which he laid special stress on the name, slightly emphasized and at the same time warning: "Fine and good, even noteworthy, but very weak." Martof was doubtless also influenced by Vera Ivanovna, who forced him away from Lenin, not politically to be sure, but psychologically. Naturally all this is more of a general psychological characterization than data material, and it is in addition a characterization that is made twenty-one years later. Since this time my memory has been much burdened and in the presentation of imponderable motives in the sphere of personal relations, mistakes as well as changes in perspective may indeed be mingled. What is here recollection and what unconscious supplementary reconstruction? I believe, however, that my memory brings back to me that which then was, and as it was.

After my so-called "trial appearance" in White-



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chapel, which Alexief reported to the staff, I was sent with an official report to the continent—to Brussels, Lüttich, Paris. The theme was: "What is historical materialism and how do the Social Revolutionaries comprehend it?" Vladimir Ilyich was very much interested in this theme. I gave him a full draft of it with quotations, etc., to look through. He advised me to work up the report into an article for the next number of "Saria," but I did not attempt it.

From Paris a telegram soon called me back to London. They were considering sending me to Russia illegally. Vladimir Ilyich's train of thought was: complaints came from there about the break-up of the organization, the lack of people, and, I believe, Claire had demanded my return. But I had not yet reached London when the plan was abandoned. L. G. Deutsch, who then lived in London and was very friendly with me, told me subsequently how he had "stood up" for me by pointing out that the "youth"—he never called me anything else—ought to live and study abroad for some time yet, and that, after some discussion, Lenin agreed with him. It would have been very interesting to work in the Russian organization of "Iskra," but nevertheless I was glad to remain abroad for some time.

One Sunday I went with Vladimir Ilyich and

Nadezda Constantinovna to a London Socialist Church, where a Social Democratic meeting alternated with the singing of God-fearing, revolutionary psalms. The speaker was, I think, a printer, who had come back to his home from Australia. Vladimir translated his speech for us in a whisper, a speech that sounded quite revolutionary for that period at least. Then everybody stood up and sang: "Almighty God, put an end to kings and rich men . . ." or something similar. "Among the English proletariat there are many revolutionary and socialist elements," said Vladimir Ilyich, as we left the church, "but it is all so intertwined with conservatism, religion, and prejudices, that it cannot reach the surface and become the property of all. . . ." It is not without interest to state here that Sasulich and Martof lived quite apart from the English workingmen's activity and were completely absorbed in the "Iskra" and what surrounded it. Lenin occasionally made independent excursions in the field of the English workingmen's activity.

It remains to be said that Vladimir Ilyich and Nadezda Constantinovna and her mother lived more than simply. On our return from the Social Democratic church we ate together in the little kitchen of their two-room dwelling. I remember as though it were yesterday the roast meat served

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in a casserole. Then we drank tea and joked as usual as to whether I could find my way home alone; it was difficult for me to find my way in the streets, and as I was inclined to systematize I called this peculiarity "topographical cretinism." The date of the Congress approached and finally it was decided to transfer the headquarters of "Iskra" to Switzerland, to Geneva; living there was much cheaper and the connection with Russia easier. Lenin concealed his annoyance and agreed. I was sent to Paris in order to go to Geneva with Martof. The preparatory work for the Congress went on with more vigor.

A short time after that Lenin came to Paris, too. He was to give three lectures on the agrarian question in the so-called Russian High School that had been organized in Paris by exiled Russian university professors. After Tchernof had appeared in the school the Marxist section of the student body had insisted on the invitation to Lenin. The professors were alarmed and begged the lecturer, if possible, not to venture into polemics. But Lenin made no binding promises and opened the first lecture thus: that Marxism is a revolutionary and consequently, in its essence, a polemical theory, but that this polemical nature in no way contradicts its scientific character. I recall that Vladimir Ilyich was much excited before his first

lecture. At the speaker's desk, however, he controlled himself at once, at least outwardly. Professor Gambarof, who had come to hear him, formulated his impression to Deutsch as follows: "A true professor!" The delightful man thought he was praising him highly.

Although polemical through and through—against the Narodniki and the social agrarian reformer David, whom Lenin compared and connected—the lectures proceeded in the framework of economic theory and left untouched the political struggle of the moment, the agrarian program of Social Democracy, of the Social Revolutionaries, etc. This limitation was imposed upon the lecturer on account of the academic character of the chair. But at the end of the third lecture Lenin gave a political report on the agrarian question. I think it was at Rue Choisy 110, arranged by the Paris group of "Iskra," and no longer by the High School. The hall was crowded. The whole student body of the High School had come to hear the practical consequences of the theoretical lectures. The speech dealt with the agrarian program of "Iskra" at the time and particularly the indemnity for the division of land. I no longer remember who opposed it, but I do remember that Vladimir Ilyich was splendid in his concluding words. One of the

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Parisian "Iskra" people said to me on leaving: "Lenin surpassed himself to-day."

Afterwards the "Iskra" people went with the speaker to a café. All were very gratified and the lecturer himself in a happy mood. The cashier of the group told us of the entrance receipts that the meeting had brought to the "Iskra" cash box,—evidently between 75 and 100 francs; a sum not to be despised.

This all happened in the beginning of 1903; for the moment I cannot tell the date more accurately, but I think it would not be hard to do so, if it has not been done already.

During this visit of Lenin it was decided to take him to the opera. N. I. Sedovaja, a member of the "Iskra" staff, was appointed to arrange the affair. Vladimir Ilyich came to the theater—it was the Opera Comique—and left the theater with the same map that had taken him to his lecture at the High School. The opera was "Louise" by Massenet,<sup>1</sup> and its subject is very democratic. We sat in a group in the gallery. Besides Lenin, Sedovaja, and myself, Martof was there; the others I no longer remember. There is a little circumstance, quite unmusical, connected with this visit to the opera, that has made a deep impression on me. Lenin had bought himself

<sup>1</sup> Trozky here confuses Massenet with Charpentier.—*Translator.*



boots in Paris. They proved to be too narrow. He worried himself over them a few hours until he decided to take them off. As ill-luck would have it, my shoes left much to be desired. I received these boots, and in my delight they seemed to fit splendidly at first. I wanted to initiate them on our visit to the opera. The walk there passed off happily. But in the theater I felt that things were not going well. Probably that is the reason I no longer remember what impression the opera made on Lenin and myself. I only know that he was roused up, joked and laughed. On the way home I suffered terribly and Vladimir Ilyich teased me unmercifully the whole time. Back of his joking, however, there was real fellow-feeling: he had himself suffered some hours of torture in these boots, as I have said.

I mentioned above Lenin's excitement before his Paris lectures. I must dwell on this. This kind of excitement showed itself in him also much later, and in a stronger form the less the audience was "his," the more formal the occasion of the meeting. Outwardly Lenin always spoke convincingly, impetuously and quickly, so that his speeches were a bitter affliction for the stenographers. But when he did not feel in his element his voice sounded somewhat strange, impersonal, and resounded like an echo. When, on the con-



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trary, Lenin detected that this very audience needed what he had to say, his voice became very animated and softly convincing, without becoming "oratorical" in the real sense of the word, rather kept up a conversational tone, on a platform scale. This was not rhetorical art, but something greater than oratory. You can naturally say that every orator speaks best before "his own" audience. In this general form that is of course right. But the question is what audience the orator feels to be his and under what circumstances. The European orators of the type of Vanderveld, who are trained by parliamentary models, need ceremonious surroundings and formal occasions for pathos. At jubilee gatherings and on gala occasions they feel in their element. For Lenin any meeting of this kind was a little personal misfortune. He was at his best and most convincing always over matters of controversy. The best examples of his public appearances are probably his speeches in the Central Committee before October.

Before the Paris reports I had heard Lenin only once, I think, in London, about the end of December, 1902. Strange to say, I have not the slightest recollection of it, neither the reason for his appearance nor the theme. I almost doubt if there really was a report by him. But apparently it happened thus: the occasion was, under the conditions in

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London, a large Russian gathering, and Lenin was present; if he did not have to make a report he scarcely ever appeared. I show the deficiencies in my memory by saying that his report probably treated as usual the same theme that was in the current number of "Iskra." I had already read Lenin's article and so the report contained nothing new for me. There was no discussion; the weak London opponents could not make up their minds to come out against Lenin. The audience, which consisted in part of unionists, and in part of anarchists, was not a very grateful one—consequently it was a tame affair. I only remember that towards the end of the meeting, the B.'s, husband and wife, of the former Petersburg group of the "Rabotschaja Mysl" (Workman's Thought), who had lived in London for some time, came to me and gave me the invitation: "Come to us on New Year's Eve" (that is why I remember that the meeting took place the end of December).

"What for?" I asked in barbaric narrow-mindedness.

"To pass the time in a circle of comrades. Ulianof will be there and Krupskaja."

I know that she said Ulianof and not Lenin, and that I did not understand at once whom they were talking about. Sasulich and Martof were invited, too. The next day we talked about it in the "den"

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and asked Lenin if he were going. I think no one went. It is a pity: it would have been the one occasion of its kind to have seen Lenin with Sasulich and Martof in the setting of New Year's Eve.

Before my departure for Geneva from Paris I was invited to Plechanof's with Sasulich and Martof. I think Vladimir Ilyich was there too. But I have only a very dim recollection of that evening. In any event it did not have a political character, but a "worldly" one, if not a bourgeois one. I remember that I sat there helpless and depressed, and if the host or hostess did not show me any special attention, did not know what to do. Plechanof's daughters passed tea and cakes. There was a certain tenseness among us all, and evidently I was not the only one who did not feel at ease. Perhaps it was due to my youth that I felt the coolness more than the others. This visit was my first and last. My impressions of this "visit" were very fleeting and probably purely accidental, as in general all my meetings with Plechanof were fleeting and accidental. The brilliant figure of Russia's Marxist old master I have tried to characterize briefly elsewhere. Here I limit myself to the scrappy impressions of the first meetings in which I had no luck at all. Sasulich, who was much distressed at such things, said to me: "I know, George can be unbearable, but in reality he

is an awfully dear beast." (A favorite eulogy of hers.)

I must remark here, that in contrast to this, in Axelrod's family there was always an atmosphere of simplicity and sincere comrade-like sympathy. I still remember gratefully the hours I spent at Axelrod's hospitable table during my frequent visits in Zurich. Vladimir Ilyich, too, spent much time here and, so far as I know from what the family told me, he felt much at home in their midst. I did not happen to meet him at Axelrod's.

As far as Sasulich is concerned her frankness and goodness to the young comrades is quite unique. If you cannot speak of hospitality in her in the real sense of the word, it is only because she herself had more need of it than she was able to show. She lodged, dressed, and supported herself like the simplest of students. Of material things her chief joys were tobacco and mustard. The one as well as the other she consumed in large quantities. When she put a thick layer of mustard on a very thin slice of ham we said: "Vera Ivanovna is extravagant. . . ."

The fourth member of the "Group for Liberation of Labor," L. G. Deutsch, was very kind and attentive to the young comrades. I do not remember, however, that as the administrator of "Iskra" he ever took part as an advisor at the

meetings of the staff. Deutsch generally went about with Plechanof and had more than moderate views on questions of revolutionary tactics. Once he said, to my great astonishment: "It will never come to an armed uprising, my boy, and it is not necessary. We had fighting-cocks in our prison who started fighting at the slightest provocation and so perished. I have, on the contrary, always taken the stand: not to give in and to let the administration understand that it will come to a big fight, but not to allow it to come to that. I gained thereby the respect of the administration and—a modification of the régime. We must use the same kind of tactics to Czarism, otherwise it will fight and destroy us without any benefit to the cause."

I was so surprised by this tactical speech that I told it in turn to Martof, Sasulich, and Lenin. I no longer remember how Martof reacted. Vera Ivanovna said: "Eugene (Deutsch's old nickname) was always like that: personally an exceptionally brave man, but politically extremely prudent and restrained." When Lenin heard it he said something like: "Hm, hm . . . yes, yes," and then we both laughed without any further comment.

In Geneva the first delegates for the coming Second Congress arrived, and there were sessions



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with them constantly. In this preparatory work Lenin unquestionably played the leading rôle, although not always perceptibly. Meetings of "Iskra's" editorial staff, meetings of "Iskra's" organization, separate meetings with delegates, in groups and together, alternated with each other. A number of the delegates came with doubts, with objections, or with demands of definite groups. The preparatory work took up much time. At the Congress there were three workmen present. Lenin talked with each of them very definitely and won all three. One of them was Schotman from Petersburg. He was still very young but cautious and deliberate. I remember how he came back after his conversation with Lenin (we were in the same lodgings) and constantly repeated: "And how his eyes glitter; he looks right through one. . . ." The delegate from Nicolaief was Kalafati. Vladimir Ilyich questioned me in detail about him—I knew him in Nicolaief—and then he added, with a sly smile: "He says he has known you as a kind of Tolstoian."

"What nonsense that is!" I said almost angrily.

"What is the matter?" Lenin replied, half to calm me, half to tease me. "You were then probably eighteen years old, and men are certainly not born Marxists."



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"That may be," I said, "but I had nothing in common with Tolstoianism."

A main point in the deliberations was the statute whereby, in the organization schemes and discussions, the correlations between the central organ and the Central Committee formed one of the most important points. I had come abroad with the idea that the central organ must "subordinate" itself to the Central Committee. That was also the attitude of the majority of the Russian "Iskra" people—to be sure without being very emphatic and definite.

"That won't do," Vladimir Ilyich replied; "that is contrary to the relative strength. How can they direct us from Russia? It won't do. . . . We are the stable center and shall direct from here."

In one of the drafts it reads that the central organ was under the obligation of bringing out the articles of the members of the Central Committee.

"Also those against the central organ?" Lenin asked.

"Naturally."

"What is that for? It leads to nothing. A polemic between two members of the central organ may be useful under certain conditions, but a polemic of 'Russian' members of the Central Committee against the central organ is inadmissible."

"But that means complete dictatorship of the central organ?" I asked.

"What is there bad about that?" Lenin answered. "In the present situation it cannot be otherwise."

There was much friction at that time about the so-called right of extension. At one of the conferences we, the young people, led the discussion to positive and negative extension.

"Yes, negative extension; that means in Russian 'cast out,'" Vladimir Ilyich said laughingly to me the next morning. "That is not so simple! Just try for once—ha, ha, ha,—to put through negative extension in the staff of the 'Iskra.'"

The most important question for Lenin was the future organization of the central organ, which in reality had to play the rôle of the Central Committee at the same time. Lenin considered it impossible to retain the old committee of six any longer. Sasulich and Martof were almost invariably on the side of Plechanof in any matter of dispute, so that, at best, it meant three against three. Neither one nor the other team of three wanted to dispense with any one of the commission. There remained the opposite course: the enlargement of the commission. Lenin wanted to introduce me as the seventh, in order to separate from the commission of seven, as also from the

enlarged staff, a closer staff group consisting of Lenin, Plechanof, and Martof. Vladimir Ilyich gradually initiated me in this plan without mentioning at all that he had already proposed me as the seventh member of the staff, and that this motion had been accepted by all, with the exception of Plechanof, who decidedly opposed it. The entrance of a seventh, in Plechanof's eyes, meant in itself a majority of the group "Liberation of Labor": four "young" against three "old" men.

I believe this plan was the main source of the extreme malevolence that George Valentinovich showed me. Unfortunately there were also smaller open clashes between us in the presence of the delegates. I think it began with the question of the popular newspaper. Some delegates emphasized the necessity of publishing a popular organ at the same time as "Iskra," if possible in Russia. This was particularly the idea of the group "Juschni Rabotschi" (workmen of the south). Lenin was a decided opponent. His deliberations were of a varied nature, but the main reason was the fear that a special grouping might be formed on the basis of a "popular" simplification of Social Democratic ideas, before the picked men of the party had settled themselves properly. Plechanof stood decidedly for the creation of a popular organ, opposed Lenin openly, and sought

the support of the local delegates. I supported Lenin. At one of the sessions I developed the idea—if it were right or not is a matter of indifference to me now—that we did not need a popular organ but a series of propagandist pamphlets and handbills that should assist in raising the progressive workman to the level of the "Iskra," that moreover a popular organ would narrow the "Iskra" and blur the political physiognomy of the party while lowering it to the standards of the Economists and Social Revolutionaries.

Plechanof objected: "What do you mean by blur? Naturally we cannot say everything in a popular organ. We shall present challenges and solutions, but not occupy ourselves with questions of tactics. We say to the workman that we must fight with capitalism, but naturally we shall not theorize with him as to 'how.' "

I took up this argument: "But the 'Economists' and Social Revolutionaries too say that we must fight with capitalism. The divergence begins with that very point, *how* the struggle is to be carried on. If we do not answer this question in the popular organ we put aside the difference between us and the Social Revolutionaries. . . ."

This reply had something very triumphant about it and Plechanof was embarrassed. This episode did not improve his relations with me. There

was a second conflict soon after this, at a staff meeting, that indeed passed the resolution to admit me to the councils until the Congress had decided on the composition of the editorial staff. Plechanof opposed it categorically. But Vera Ivanovna said to him: "But I shall bring him into it." And she really "brought" me into the session. I myself learned of this act behind the scenes considerably later and went to the meeting without misgivings. George Valentinovich greeted me with that special coolness in which he so excelled. And unfortunately at this very session the staff had to consider a matter of dispute between Deutsch and the above-mentioned Blumenfeld. Deutsch was the administrator of the "Iskra." Blumenfeld had charge of the printing. On this basis a question of jurisdiction arose. Blumenfeld complained about Deutsch's interference in the affairs of the printing office. Plechanof supported Deutsch through old friendship and proposed that Blumenfeld limit himself to the printing technique. I made the objection that it was impossible to conduct the printing office only on a technical plane, as there were, in addition, organizing and administrative affairs to settle and that Blumenfeld must be independent in all these questions. I remember Plechanof's malicious reply: "If Comrade Trotzky is right that the manifold



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superstructure of an administrative and other nature develops from technique, as the theory of historical materialism teaches, then . . ." etc.

Lenin and Martof, however, supported me discreetly and carried through the decision as needed. That was the finishing stroke. In both cases Vladimir Ilyich's sympathy was on my side. At the same time he saw with alarm that my relations with Plechanof grew much worse, which threatened to spoil his plan for reorganizing the staff. At one of the next conferences with the newly arrived delegates Lenin took me to one side and said: "On this question of a popular organ you had better leave it to Martof to answer Plechanof. Martof will cement what you break. It is better for him to cement it." These expressions *break* and *cement* I remember exactly.

After one of the staff meetings in the "Café Landolt," I believe it was after the same meeting I have just mentioned, Sasulich began, in that timid impressive voice peculiar to her in such cases, to complain that we attacked the Liberals "too much." That was her sorest spot.

"Look how you overexert yourselves," she said and looked past Lenin, though she had him in mind above all. "In the last number of 'Osvo-boschdenje,' Struve presents Jaurès as an example to our Liberals and claims that the Russian



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Liberals should not break with Socialism, because otherwise the lamentable fate of German Liberalism threatens them, but should take the French Radical Socialists as an example."

Lenin stood by the table. He had pushed back his soft hat high on his forehead; the meeting had ended and he was about to go.

"So much the more must we attack them," he said smiling contentedly and as if to tease Vera Ivanovna.

"But look," she cried in absolute despair, "they come to meet us and we strike at them!"

"Yes, naturally, Struve says to his Liberals, 'You must not use coarse German methods to our Socialism, but the finer French ones; you must coquette, attract, deceive and corrupt, in the style of the Left French Radicals, who are ogling Jaurèsism.'"

Naturally I cannot give this important speech word for word. Its meaning and substance, however have been sharply impressed on my memory. I have not at the moment anything at hand to prove it, but it would not be difficult; one would have only to look over the early numbers of "Osvo-boschdenje" of 1903 for Struve's article about the relation of the Liberals to Democratic Socialism in general and to Jaurèsism in particular. I remember this article on account of Vera Ivanovna's

words during the scene mentioned above. If you add to the date of appearance of the copy of "Osvoboschdenje" in question the time required for it to reach Geneva and Vera Ivanovna's hands and be read by her, that is, three or four days, one can settle pretty closely the date of this dispute in Café Landolt. I recall that it was a spring day—perhaps already early summer—the sun was shining brightly and Lenin's deep laugh was also bright. I remember clearly his quietly ironical, confident and "sturdy" appearance, I say this intentionally, although Vladimir Ilyich was then more slender than in the last part of his life. Vera Ivanovna turned hastily from one to another, as she always did. But I believe no one interfered in the dispute, which took place as we were leaving and did not last long.

I went home with her. Sasulich was depressed; she felt that Struve's card had failed. I could not give her any consolation. However, not one of us suspected then to *what* degree the card of Russian Liberalism had been beaten in this little dialogue by the door of Café Landolt.

I perceive now the total inadequacy of the episodes I have told above: they are too pale. But I have carefully gathered everything my memory

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had preserved at the beginning of this work, even what was of little importance, because there is almost no one left now, who could speak in more detail of this period. Plechanof is dead. Sasulich is dead. Martof is dead. And Lenin is dead. It is hardly possible that any one of them has left memoirs. Vera Ivanovna perhaps? Nothing has been heard of them. Of "Iskra's" former staff only Axelrod and Potresof are living. Without mentioning all other considerations, they both had but a small part in the editorial work and were rarely present at the staff meetings. Deutsch could tell some things, but he only came abroad shortly before the close of the period described, a short time before me, besides did not share in the editorial work immediately. Nadezda Constantinovna can, and, we hope, will give priceless information. She stood then in the very center of the entire work of organization, received the comrades arriving, gave instructions to and dismissed those departing, arranged connections, gave information, wrote letters, ciphered and deciphered. The odor of burnt paper was almost always noticeable in her room. She often complained in her gently energetic way that comrades over there wrote little, that they had confused the cipher, and that the lines written in chemical ink were very indistinct, etc. It is of still more importance that Na-

dezda Constantinovna, hand in hand with Lenin every day in this organizing work, could observe what went on in him and around him. None the less, I hope these pages will not be superfluous as, in my time, at least, Nadezda Constantinovna was rarely present at the staff meeting. But above all, the fresh eye of some one not immediately concerned now and then notices what the familiar eye no longer sees. Be that as it may, let that be told that I can tell. Now I will give some general opinions as to why, at the time of the "Iskra" a definite change in Lenin's political self-consciousness had to take place, in his self-estimation, so to speak, why this change was inevitable, and how it was necessary.

Lenin went abroad as a mature man of thirty. In Russia, in the student unions, in the first Social Democratic groups, in the colonies of exiles, he held the highest position. He could not but perceive his strength, already unique, for all with whom he came in contact and with whom he worked recognized it. He went abroad with much theoretical luggage, with an important political experience, and completely obsessed by the purpose of working for a definite goal which determined his intellectual nature. Abroad there awaited him work as a collaborator in the "Group for the Liberation of Labor," especially with

Plechanof, the profound and brilliant commentator of Marx, the teacher of entire generations, the theorist, politician, publicist, and orator of European fame and European connections. At Plechanof's side stood two of the greatest authorities: Sasulich and Axelrod. It was not only her heroic past that had put Vera Ivanovna in the foreground. No, it was rather her keen intellect, with its comprehensive, historically inclined cultivation and its rare psychological intuition. In his time the "Group" was also connected with old Engels. In opposition to Plechanof and Sasulich, who above all were connected with Romanic Socialism, Axelrod represented in the "Group" the ideas and experiences of German Social Democracy. This difference in the "spheres of influence" was expressed also in their places of residence. Plechanof and Sasulich lived generally in Geneva, Axelrod in Zurich. Axelrod concentrated on questions of tactics. He has not written a single theoretical or historical book, as is well known. He wrote very little, and what he wrote almost always concerned tactical questions of Socialism. In this sphere Axelrod showed independence and acuteness. From numerous conversations with him—I was very friendly with him and Sasulich for some time—I have a clear impression that much of what Plechanof has written



on questions of tactics is a fruit of collective work, and that Axelrod's part in it is considerably more important than one can prove from the printed documents alone. Axelrod said more than once to Plechanof, the undisputed and beloved leader of the "Group" (before the break in 1903): "George, you have a long snout, and take from everywhere what you need."

As is well known, Axelrod wrote the introduction to Lenin's manuscript sent from Russia, "The Tasks of the Russian Social Democrats." By this act the "Group" adopted the talented young Russian party worker, but at the same time made it known that he was to be looked upon as a pupil. And so with this reputation Lenin and two other pupils arrived in a foreign land. I was not present at the first meetings of pupils and teachers, at those conferences where the policy of "Iskra" was worked out. Moreover, the observations of the half year described above and particularly of the Second Party Congress make it easy to understand that the reason for the extreme sharpness of the conflict, besides the question of principles just indicated, lay in the bad judgment of the old men in estimating Lenin's development and significance.

In the course of the Second Congress and immediately after it, Axelrod's displeasure and that



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of the other members of the staff at Lenin's behavior joined in the surprise: "How does he do it?" This surprise increased when Lenin, after the break with Plechanof, who soon afterward entered the Congress, continued the fight none the less. Axelrod's state of mind and that of the others can perhaps be best expressed in the words: "*What kind of fly has stung him?*"

"He only came abroad not a very long time ago," the old man said; "he came as a pupil and his behavior was what was expected." (Axelrod emphasized this above all in his descriptions of the first months of the "Iskra.") Whence this sudden self-confidence? How does he do it?" etc.

The conclusion was: he prepared the ground in advance in Russia. Not in vain were all the connections in Nadezda Constantinovna's hands; there too the work of the Russian comrades against the "Group for the Liberation of Labor" went on quietly. Sasulich was indeed not less indignant than the others, but perhaps she understood more than the others. Not in vain had she said to Lenin, long before the split, in contrast with Plechanof that he had "a deadly bite." And who knows what effect these words had upon him? Whether Lenin did not repeat to himself: "Yes, that is right: who, if not Sasulich, can know Plechanof? He shakes and shakes his opponent,

and lets him go, while our task demands something quite different. . . . Here it requires the deadly bite."

To what degree and in what sense the words about a preparatory "work" of the Russian comrades are right, Nadezda Constantinovna can best tell. But in the broader sense of the word one can say without further examination of the facts, that such a preparation took place. Lenin always prepared the day to follow while he affirmed and improved today. His creative mind never stiffened and his vigilance never tired. And when he came to the conclusion that the "Group for Liberation of Labor," because of the approaching revolution, was not in a position to assume the immediate direction of the organization for the struggle of the proletarian vanguard, he drew for himself all the practical inferences. The old men had made a mistake; and not the old men alone; this was no longer the young, capable party worker whom Axelrod had favored by a friendly patronizing foreword; this was rather a leader, fully cognizant of his goal, who, in my opinion, already felt himself destined to be a leader, after he had worked side by side with the old men, the teachers, and convinced himself that he was stronger and more necessary than they. It is true that in Russia too Lenin had been the first among equals, according

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to Martof's expression. But there, after all, it had only been a question of the first Social Democratic groups, of young organizations. The Russian standards still bore the stamp of provincialism: how many Russian Lasalles and Russian Bebels there then! It was a different matter with the "Group for the Liberation of Labor": Plechanof, Axelrod and Sasulich were in the same rank with Kautsky, Lafargue, Guesde, and Bebel, the real, German Bebel! When Lenin measured his strength in work with them, he had, at the same time, measured himself with the great European standard. Especially in his conflicts with Plechanof, when the staff grouped itself about the two poles, Lenin's self-consciousness must have gone through that steeling without which he would not have been Lenin later on.

And the conflicts with the old men were inevitable. Not because there had been two different conceptions of revolutionary movement. No, this was not yet the case at this time, but the manner of approaching political events, in organizing and, particularly, in handling practical problems, consequently too the position towards the approaching revolution, were fundamentally different. The old men of the party had twenty years of exile back of them. For them the "Iskra"

and "Saria" was a literary undertaking above everything else. For Lenin, on the contrary, they meant the immediate instrument of revolutionary activity. In Plechanof the revolutionary skeptic was deeply rooted, as was proved a few years later (1905-1906) and more tragically still in the imperialist war: he looked upon Lenin's directness of purpose haughtily, and only had a malicious, condescending witty remark to make about it. Axelrod, as I have already said, was closer to the tactical problems, but his train of thoughts refused stubbornly to consider the questions of preparation for preparation. Axelrod analyzed with the greatest skill the tendencies and shadings of the different groupings of the revolutionary Intellectuals. He was a homeopath of the pre-revolutionary politics. His methods and mediums had something of the character of the apothecary shop, of the laboratory. The quantities with which he worked were always very small; the societies with which he had to do he could measure with the finest scales. Not without reason did Deutsch consider Axelrod like Spinoza, and not in vain was Spinoza a diamond cutter; a work that requires a magnifying glass. Lenin, on the contrary, looked upon the events and conditions as a whole and understood how to grasp the social complex in his thought; so he wagered on the approaching

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revolution, which burst upon Plechanof, as well as Axelrod, all of a sudden.

Probably Vera Ivanovna Sasulich felt most directly of the old people the approach of the revolution. Her strong character, free from all pedantry, intuitively historical, helped her in this. But she felt the revolution as an old radical. In the depths of her soul she was convinced that all the elements of revolution already existed among us, especially the "actual" self-confident liberalism that would take the leadership, and that we Marxists by our hasty criticism and "pursuit" only frightened the Liberals and thereby played fundamentally a counter-revolutionary rôle. Vera Ivanovna did not say all this in the press, of course. In personal conversations too she did not express it so fully. None the less it was her deep conviction and thence came the opposition between her and Axelrod, whom she considered a doctrinaire. In reality, within the limits of tactical homeopathy, Axelrod emphasized unconditionally the revolutionary hegemony of Social Democracy. He only refused to carry over this view-point from the language of groups and unions to the language of the classes when they entered the movement. Here too the abyss between him and Lenin was revealed.

Lenin did not go abroad as a Marxist "in



general," not for publicist revolutionary work "in general," not simply to continue the work of twenty years of the "Group for the Liberation of Labor"; no, he went as the potential leader, and not as a leader "in general," but as the leader of that revolution that was growing and that he palpably perceived. He went to create within the shortest time the ideological tools and the organizing apparatus for the revolution. I speak of Lenin's impetuous and yet at the same time disciplined characteristic of striving for his goal, not in the sense that he had only tried to assist in the victory of the "final aim," no, that is too universal and shallow, but in the concrete, direct and immediate sense, that he had put up a practical goal, to hasten the beginning of the revolution and to assure its victory. As Lenin worked abroad shoulder to shoulder with Plechanof, and as what the Germans call "the pathos of distance" vanished, it must have become physically clear to the "pupil" that he not only had nothing more to learn from the teacher about the question which he then considered fundamental, but that the skeptical critical teacher, thanks to his authority, was in a position to hinder his rescue work and to separate him from the younger colleagues. This is the basis of Lenin's far-seeing anxiety about the staff's formation, hence the combinations of "The



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committees of seven and three, "hence the striving to separate Plechanof from the "Group of Liberation of Labor," to form a leading commission of three in which Lenin would always have had for himself Plechanof in questions of revolutionary theory and Martof in questions of revolutionary policies. The personal combinations were changed; but the "anticipation" that remained unchanged in the man finally became blood, flesh, and bones.

At the Second Congress Lenin won Plechanof, but he was an unreliable confederate. At the same time he lost Martof and lost him forever. Plechanof had evidently noticed something at the Second Congress; at least he then said to Axelrod, as the latter reproached him in bitterness and surprise on account of his alliance with Lenin: "From this dough come Robespierres." I do not know if this important sentence ever got into the press and if it is generally known in the party; but I vouch for its correctness. "From this dough come Robespierres! and even something much greater, George Valentinovich," history replies. But apparently this historic revelation grew dim in Plechanof's consciousness. He broke with Lenin and returned to skepticism and his biting sarcasm, which, as time went on, lost their sharpness.

But in the anticipation of the "break" it was

not only a question of Plechanof and the old men of the party. At the Second Congress a certain commencement stage of the preparatory period came to an end. The circumstance that the "Iskra organization" split up quite unexpectedly into two almost even parts proved in itself and for itself that in this commencement stage much had happened that was not known. Class party had just broken through the shell of intellectual radicalism. The stream of Intelligentsia to Marxism was not exhausted. The student movement with its left wing inclined towards the "Iskra." Among the intellectual youth, particularly abroad, there were numerous groups that supported the "Iskra." All this was youthfully green and for the most part hesitating. Women students who belonged to the "Iskra" put such questions to the chairman: "Can an 'Iskra' adherent marry a navy officer?" There were only three workmen at the Second Congress and that was only accomplished with trouble. The "Iskra" brought together and trained numbers of professional Revolutionaries and drew the young and heroically minded workmen under their banner. On the other hand, important intellectual groups passed through the "Iskra" only to turn aside soon afterward to the people connected with "Osvoboschdenje." The "Iskra" was successful, not only as the Marxist

organ of the proletarian party which was being formed, but also as the extreme left political combative publicist that would not let itself be bullied. The more radical elements among the Intelligentsia were zealously ready to fight for freedom under "Iskra's" banner. Along with this, the pedagogic disbelief in the strength of the proletariat, that had found its expression earlier in economics, had now succeeded, and rather openly, in changing its color under the protection of "Iskra," without thereby changing its nature. For in the long run "Iskra's" brilliant victory was much greater than its actual conquests. I shall not undertake to pass judgment here to what degree Lenin accounted to himself clearly and completely for this before the Second Congress, but at any rate more clearly and completely than any one else. Those rather motley currents that were grouped under "Iskra's" standard were reflected in the staff itself. Lenin alone represented the coming day with its difficult problems, its fearful conflicts and unnumbered sacrifices. Hence his foresight and his combative mistrust. Hence his careful treatment of questions of organization that have their symbolic expression in paragraph I of the law about the membership of the party.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The statute is as follows in Lenin's setting: "A member of the party is one who *participates* in an *organization* of the party"; in Martof's form: "who works under the *Control* of the party."—*Translator*.

It is quite natural that when the Second Congress began to destroy the fruits of "Iskra's" ideological victory, Lenin began a new arrangement, a new, more pretentious and stronger selection. To make up his mind to such a step, in which he had only an unreliable partial ally in Plechanof, while he had half the Congress and all the other members of the staff as open and decided opponents, under such circumstances to make up his mind to a new selection, he had to have a strong faith, not only in the thing itself, but in his own powers. This faith grew out of his practically controlled self-estimation that sprang from his common work with the "teachers" and the first stormy conflicts which preceded the coming thunder and lightning of the split. Lenin's entire, forceful directness of purpose was requisite to begin such an undertaking and carry it to its conclusion. Incessantly Lenin strained the bow string to the utmost, to the snapping point, while at the same time he carefully tested it with his finger to see if it slackened anywhere, or if it threatened to break.

"You cannot strain your bow like that; it will break," they called to him from every side.

"It will not break," the master answered; "our bow is made of unbreakable proletarian material, and one must strain the party string more and more, for the heavy arrow has far to fly!"



October, 1917





## BEFORE THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION

**L**ENIN'S arrival in Petersburg and his appearance at the workmen's meetings against war and the Provisional Government I learned from the American newspapers in the Canadian concentration camp Amhurst. The interned German sailors began at once to take an interest in Lenin, whose name they came across for the first time in the newspaper dispatches. They were all impatiently waiting for the end of the war, which would open the gates of the concentration prison for them. They listened with greatest attention to every voice raised against war. Up to this time they had known only Liebknecht. But they had often been told that Liebknecht had been bribed by the Entente. Now they learned of Lenin. I told them of Zimmerwald and Kienthal. Lenin's appearance won over many to Liebknecht.

On my journey through Finland I received the first new Russian newspapers, with telegrams about the entrance of Zeretely, Skobolef and other "Socialists" in the Provisional Government. The situation thereby became perfectly clear. The

second or third day after my arrival in Petersburg I familiarized myself with Lenin's April theses. It was exactly what the revolution needed. It was only later that I read Lenin's article in "Pravda": "The First Stage of the First Revolution," which he had sent from Switzerland. Even yet one can and should read with the greatest attention and political advantage the first very indefinite numbers of the revolutionary "Pravda," against whose background Lenin's "A Stranger's Letter" reveals him in his whole collective strength. Very calm in tone and theoretically explanatory, this article resembles a powerful steel spiral, surrounded by a strong band, which in the future will expand, spread out and embrace ideologically the entire meaning of revolution.

I arranged with Comrade Kamenief for a visit to the editorial office of "Pravda" on one of the first days after my arrival. The first meeting must have taken place on the 5th or 6th of May. I told Lenin that nothing separated me from his April theses and from the whole course that the party had taken since his arrival, and that I was faced with the alternative, either to enter the party organization at once "individually," or to try to bring with me the best part of the "Unionists," whose organization in Petersburg numbered almost three thousand workmen, with whom were

associated a number of valuable revolutionary forces: Urizky, Lunacharsky, Joffe, Vladimirof, Manuilsky, Karachan, Jurenief, Posern, Litkens and others. Antonof-Ovsyenko had already joined the party; I think Sokolnikof also. Lenin did not express himself categorically for one or the other. It was necessary, above everything else, that I make myself more familiar with the situation and the men. Lenin considered that some form of coöperation with Martof, and particularly with a part of Mensheviki Internationalists who had just returned from abroad, was not out of the question. We must certainly watch what the relations of the "Internationalists" themselves were to the work. As I tacitly agreed with him, I, for my part, did not force the natural development of events. Our political policy was the same. At the workmen and soldiers' meetings I said from the first day of my arrival: "We, Bolsheviki and Internationalists," and as the conjunction "and" burdened my speech by its constant repetition I soon shortened the form and began to say: "We, Bolsheviki Internationalists." Thus the political union preceded the organized one.<sup>1</sup>

I was at the editorial office of "Pravda" two or

<sup>1</sup>N. N. Suchanof constructs, in his history of the revolution, a particular political policy that would have separated me from Lenin's. But Suchanof is a well-known "constructivist."

three times at the most critical moments before the July days. At these first meetings, and still more after the July days, Lenin gave the impression of intense concentration and formidable self-possession beneath the mask of "prosaic" simplicity and calm. In these days the Kerenskiad seemed all-powerful. Bolshevism represented "a miserable little company." The party itself did not yet realize its future strength. But at the same time Lenin, determined, led it on to its prodigious tasks.

His speeches at the first Congress of Soviets aroused anxiety and enmity among the Social Revolutionary Menshevist majority. They felt dimly that this man was aiming far ahead, but they did not see the goal itself. And the revolutionary little citizens asked themselves: Who is he? What is he? Is he simply a madman? Or a projectile of history of range as yet unknown?

Lenin's appearance at the Congress of Soviets, where he spoke of the necessity of imprisoning fifty capitalists, was perhaps not a rhetorical "success." But it was extraordinarily significant. Short applause of the relatively few Bolsheviks accompanied the speaker as he left the platform with the look of a man who has not said all, and especially not as he wished to say it. . . . At this moment a breath of the unusual spread through

the room. It was a suggestion of what was coming that all felt for a moment as they followed with bewildered looks this so commonplace and so enigmatic man.

Who is he? What is he? Did not Plechanof in his newspaper call Lenin's first speech on the revolutionary soil of Petersburg a fantasia of fever? Did not the delegates chosen by the masses generally join the Social Revolutionaries and the Mensheviki? Did not Lenin's position among the Bolsheviki themselves at first arouse violent dissatisfaction?

On one side Lenin categorically demanded the break, not only with bourgeois Liberalism, but also with all kinds of Defensivism.<sup>1</sup> In his own party he organized the struggle against the "old Bolsheviki," who—as Lenin wrote—had already, more than once, played a melancholy rôle in the history of our party because they thoughtlessly repeated a *current formula*, instead of *studying* the peculiarities of the new living reality.<sup>2</sup> Regarded superficially he thereby weakened his own party. On the other hand, he declared at the same time at the Congress of Soviets: "It is not true that no party was ready to seize the power now; there is such a party; it is our party." Is there not an enor-

<sup>1</sup> Adherent of a revolutionary defensive war against the Germans.  
—*Translator*.

<sup>2</sup> Collected Works, Vol. XIV, Part I, page 28.



mous contradiction between the position of a "Society of Propagandists," isolated from all others, and this public declaration about the seizure of power in this gigantic land, shattered to its foundations? And the Congress of Soviets did not understand in the least what this curious man wanted, what he hoped for, this cold fanatic who wrote little articles in a little newspaper. When in the Congress of Soviets Lenin declared with great simplicity, which proved its genuineness by its plainness: "Our party is ready to take over the power altogether," laughter resounded. "Laugh as much as you wish," said Lenin. He knew; who laughs last, laughs best. Lenin loved this proverb because he was firmly determined to laugh last. He went on calmly to show that, as a beginning, they should imprison fifty or a hundred of the most important millionaires and declare to the people that we looked upon all capitalists as robbers, and that Tereschenko was no better than Miliukof, only duller. Terrible, destructive, deadly simple opinions! And this representative of a small part of the Congress which applauded him discreetly from time to time, said to the whole Congress: "Are you afraid of power? We are ready to seize it." As answer naturally—laughter, at the moment almost condescending, but just a little troubled.

For his second speech, too, Lenin chose fearfully simple words from the letter of a certain peasant: "We must grab the bourgeoisie more firmly so that they will burst in all their seams, then the war would come to an end; but if we do not grab the bourgeoisie thus, it will be nasty for us." And this simple naïve quotation is the whole program? How can that not be a surprise? And again laughter, condescending and troubled. In reality, these words, "grab the bourgeoisie," had not much weight as an abstract program of a group of propagandists. The surprised people, however, did not understand that Lenin listened unerringly to the growing attack of history on the bourgeoisie which would inevitably make it "burst in all its seams." Not in vain had Lenin declared in May to the citizen Maklakof that "the land of the workmen and the poorest peasants is a thousand times more Left than the Tchernofs and the Zeretelys, and a hundred times more Left than we."

Here was the chief source of Lenin's tactics. Through the new, but already deeply troubled, democratic surface he perceived deep within "the land of the workmen and the poorest peasants." It was ready for the greatest revolution. But the country did not yet understand how to prove its readiness politically. The parties that spoke in

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the name of the workmen and peasants deceived them. Millions of workmen and peasants did not know our party at all, had not yet realized it to be the champion of their endeavors, and our party itself had at that time not yet understood its whole potential power and was in consequence a "hundred times" more Right than the workmen and peasants. We had to force them together. We had to prepare the party for the masses of millions and the masses of millions for the party. Not to hurry forward too far, but also not to stay behind. To explain carefully and perseveringly. Even the simplest things had to be explained. "Down with the ten capitalistic ministers!" The Mensheviki do not agree? Down with the Mensheviki! They laugh? Everything in its time. He laughs best who laughs last.

I remember that I suggested demanding of the Congress of Soviets that they first consider the question of the offensive against the Germans that was being prepared at the front. Lenin agreed to the idea, but he evidently wanted to discuss it with other members of the Central Committee. At the first session of the Central Committee, Comrade Kamenief brought a draft of the declaration of the Bolsheviki about the offensive, hastily sketched by Lenin. I do not know if the document still exists. His text did not suit either the Bol-

sheviki taking part in the Congress or the Internationalists, I no longer know why. Posern, too, whom we wished to delegate to bring it up, objected. I drew up another text which was accepted. The organizing for bringing this forward, if I am not mistaken, was in the hands of Sverdlof, whom I met for the first time during the first Congress of Soviets as president of the Bolshevik faction.

In spite of his small and slender figure, which indicated the state of poor health, there was something about Sverdlof's manner that gave the impression of significance and quiet strength. He presided quietly and uniformly, exactly, as a good motor works. The secret lay naturally not in the art of presiding itself, but in the fact that he had an excellent idea of the personal composition of the assembly and knew exactly what he wanted to carry through. Every session was preceded by conferences with the separate delegates, inquiries, and warnings here and there. Before the opening of a session he had, on the whole, an idea of its course. But even without preparatory conferences he knew better than any one else how this or that workman would respond to the question put to him. The number of comrades of whose political horizon he had a clear idea was very large for the scale of our party at that time. He

was a born organizer and combiner. Every political question presented itself to him as concretely organizable above everything else, as a question of the correlations of separate people and groupings within the party organization, and of the correlations between the organization as a whole and the masses. The numerical significance he grasped immediately and almost automatically in algebraic forms. Thereby he furnished, so far as it was a question of revolutionary action, a highly important proof of the political formulas.

After the flash in the pan of the demonstration of the 10th of June, when the atmosphere in the First Congress of Soviets was at white heat and Zeretely threatened to disarm the Petersburg workmen, I went with Comrade Kamenief to the editorial offices of "Pravda" and wrote there, after a short exchange of opinion, at the suggestion of Comrade Lenin, the draft of an address of the Central Committee of the party to the Executive Committee (of the Congress).

At this meeting Lenin said a few words about Zeretely, in regard to his last speech on the 11th of June: "He was once a revolutionary; how many years he has spent in prison! And now this complete renunciation of the past."

In these words there was nothing political, they were not spoken for politics, but were only the



fruit of a hasty reflection on the lamentable fate of the former great revolutionary. In his tone lay a tinge of regret, of sorrow, but it was said briefly and dryly, for nothing was so repugnant to Lenin as the slightest suspicion of sentimentality and psychological weakness.

On the 4th or 5th of July I met Lenin (and also Sinovief?) as I remember, in the Tauride Palace. Our attack had been repulsed. The bitterness against the Bolsheviki had reached its peak among the governing powers.

"Now they will overthrow us," Lenin said. "Now is their given moment." His basic thought was to begin the retreat and, as far as it turned out to be necessary, to go on illegally. Lenin's strategy had seldom had to make so sharp a turn, but it was as usual based on a rapid estimation of the situation. Later during the Third Congress of the Communist Internationalists, Vladimir Ilyich said incidentally: "In July we committed not a few blunders." By this he had in mind our hasty armed uprising, the much too aggressive form of the demonstration which was in no proportion to our forces in the scale of the country. Remarkable, nevertheless, is that calm decision with which on the 4th/5th of July he weighed not only the revolutionary, but also the opposite, side of the situation, and came to the conclusion that for



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"them" it was now the time to attack us. Fortunately our enemies had neither sufficient logical consistency nor decision. Otherwise it is very probable that they, that is their officers' clique, if they could have laid hands on Lenin the first days after the July rising, would have treated him exactly as the German officers' camarilla treated Liebknecht and Rosa Luxembourg a year and a half later.

A direct resolve to hide, or to act illegally, was not made at the above-mentioned meeting. The Kornilof episode was a continual fluctuation. I personally let myself be seen for two or three days more, and at some party and organizing conferences came forward with the theme: What is to be done? The stormy attack on the Bolsheviki seemed insurmountable. The Mensheviki tried in every way to make use of the situation, which had not developed entirely independent of them. I remember that I was obliged to speak in the library of the Tauride Palace at some meeting of the representatives of the mining companies' unions. There were altogether a few dozen men present, the leaders of the unions. The Mensheviki predominated. I spoke of the necessity of a protest of the mining companies against the accusation that the Bolsheviki were in alliance with German Militarism. Of the course of this meet-

ing I have only a dim recollection now, but I do remember exactly two or three malicious faces of men who were there to hiss at us.

At this time terror assumed fixed forms. Imprisonments were the order of the day. For a few days I lay hidden in the home of Comrade Larin. Then I began to go out again, showed myself in the Tauride Palace, and was soon imprisoned. My release followed during the days of the Kornilof episode and the ensuing Bolshevik counter-blow. At this time we succeeded in bringing the "Unionists" over into the Bolshevik Party. Sverdlof suggested to me that I meet Lenin, who was still in hiding. I no longer remember who introduced me to the conspiring workmen's quarters (was it not Rachia?), where I met Vladimir Ilyich. There I met Kalinin also, whom Lenin further questioned in my presence about the mood of the workmen; whether they were fighting, whether they would go to the limit, whether we could seize the power, etc.

What was Lenin's mood at this time? If one wants to characterize it in a few words one must say that it was a mood of restrained impatience and deep anxiety. He saw clearly the moment approaching when everything would be at the knife's edge, and at the same time he was of the opinion, and not without grounds, that the chiefs

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of the party did not draw all the necessary conclusions. The deportment of the Central Committee seemed to him too passive and dilatory. Lenin did not feel it yet possible to return openly to the work because he feared that his imprisonment might strengthen the dilatoriness of the party leaders, which would inevitably have led to a neglect of the extraordinary revolutionary situation. Therefore in these days and weeks Lenin's vigilance and impatience at all signs of hesitation, at all intimations of waiting and indecision, reached their climax. He demanded that we should at once put a real conspiracy to work, surprise the opponent, snatch the power,—and then we would see. At all events there must be more agreement about it.

Lenin's biographer will have to treat with the greatest attention the fact of Lenin's return to Russia and his attitude toward the masses. With a short interruption in 1905 Lenin had spent more than fifteen years abroad. His feeling for reality, his instinct for the living, working human being had not only not diminished in this time, but on the contrary had been strengthened by the work of theoretical thinking and of creative imagination. By separate chance meetings and observations he grasped and renewed the picture of the whole. But still he had lived abroad in that period

of his life in which he finally developed for his coming historical rôle. He arrived in Petersburg with a completed revolutionary point of view that was a résumé of the entire social, theoretical, and practical experience of his life. And here first, on the living experience of the awakening working masses of Russia, the test was made of what he had gathered, thought over, and made his own.

The formulas stood the test. Moreover, here first in Russia, in Petersburg, they were filled with ordinary decisive concreteness and thereby with unconquerable strength. It is not yet the time to present the picture in perspective of the whole by separate and more or less accidental examples. The whole spoke for itself with all the voices of the revolution, and here Lenin proved, probably he felt it himself for the first time fully and completely, to what degree he possessed the ability to hear the yet chaotic voice of the awakening mass. With what deep organic disdain he watched the petty quarrels of the leading parties of Russia in February, these waves of "powerful" public opinion which passed from one newspaper to another, the shortsightedness, the self-esteem, the talkativeness,—in short, official February Russia.

Behind this scene, set with democratic decorations, he heard events of quite another scale rumbling: When the skeptics pointed out to him the

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great difficulties of the mobilization of the bourgeois public opinion, and the little citizen element, he set his jaws, and his cheekbones stood out more prominently than ever. That meant that he was forcing himself not to tell the skeptics, sharply and clearly, what he thought of them. He saw and understood the obstacles throughout no less than the others, but he detected clearly, palpably, and physically, those gigantic forces accumulated by history, that now made their way to the surface and cast all obstacles aside. He saw, heard, and perceived above all the Russian workman, who had grown in numbers, who had not yet forgotten the experience of the year 1905, who had back of him the school of war along with its illusions, the lying and deceit of defensivism, and was now ready for great sacrifices and unheard-of exertions. He perceived the soldier, who had been bewildered by three years of diabolical war, "without meaning and without purpose," until the thunder of revolution wakened him and he got ready to pay back all those meaningless sacrifices, humiliations, and blows by the explosion of a raging hate that spared nothing. He heard the peasant, who still dragged along in the chains of hundreds of years of slavery, and now, roused by the war, for the first time saw the possibility of settling his accounts formidably and unsparingly with the op-



pressors, the slaveholders, the masters. The peasant hesitated helplessly and clumsily between Tchernof's jingle of words and his own "means," the great agrarian uprising. Still filled with uncertainty, the soldier sought a path between patriotism and unrestrained deserting. Although they were already incredulous and half hostile, the workmen still listened to the last tirades of Zeretely. Already the steam seethed impatiently in the boilers of the Kronstadt armed cruisers. The sailor combined in himself the steel-sharpened hate of the workmen and the dull bear-like rage of the peasant, and, singed by the glow of the terrible war, had already thrown everything overboard that embodied for him the *established* bureaucratic and military oppression. The *February revolution* stood before an abyss. The benevolent coalition had gathered up, stretched out, and sewn together the shreds of czaristic legality, and converted it into a thin surface of democratic legality. But under it everything simmered and bubbled, all the wrongs of the past sought an outlet. Hatred toward the police, the district inspector, the police commissar, the registrars, the manufacturers, those who lived on their incomes, property holders, toward the parasites, the white-handed, the reviler and the assailant, prepared the greatest revolutionary overturn in history. It was



this that Lenin saw and heard, that he felt physically with infallible clearness and absolute conviction when, after a long absence, he came into touch with the land stricken by the convulsions of revolution.

"You fools, babblers, and idiots, do you believe that history is made in the salons, where high-born democrats fraternize with titled liberals, where miserable provincial advocates of yesterday very soon learn to kiss illustrious little hands? Fools! Babblers! Idiots! History is made in the trenches where under the foolish pressure of war-madness the soldier thrusts his bayonet into the officer's body and escapes to his home village to set fire to the manor house. Doesn't this barbarity please you? Don't get excited, history answers you: just put up with it all. Those are merely the consequences of all that has gone before. You imagine that history is made in your contact commissions? Nonsense! Talk! Fancy! Cretinism! History—may that be shown—this time has chosen the palace of Kchesinskaja the dancer, the former mistress of the former czar, as its preparation laboratory. And from there, from this building, symbolic for old Russia, she prepares the liquidation of our entire Petersburg-czaristic, bureaucratic-noble, junker-bourgeois corruption and shamelessness. Here, to the palace of the former

imperial ballerina, are coming in streams the Russian delegates of the factories, with the gray, scarred, and lousy messengers from the trenches, and from here new prophetic words will spread over the land."

The unfortunate ministers of the revolution held councils and tried to find a way to restore the palace to its legal owner. The bourgeois, Social Revolutionary, and Menshevist newspapers ground their teeth in rage because Lenin, from Kchesinskaja's balcony, hurled the watchwords of social revolution among the masses. But this tardy effort was of no avail, either to add to Lenin's hate against old Russia, or his decision to settle accounts with it! The one as well as the other had already reached its limit. On Kchesinskaja's balcony stood Lenin, the same man who two months later hid himself in a hayloft, and who, a few weeks after that, took the place of president in the Council of People's Commissars.

But at the same time Lenin saw that there existed within the party itself a conservative opposition—for the first time not so much of a political as of a psychological nature—to that great leap that had to be made. Lenin watched with anxiety the growing difference between the mood of part of the party heads and the millions of workmen. He was not satisfied for a moment with the

fact that the Central Committee had adopted the formula of the armed uprising. He knew the difficulties of the transition from words to deeds. With all the forces and means at his disposition he strove to subjugate the party to the masses, and the Central Committee of the party to the ranks of its fellow members. He summoned single comrades to his place of refuge, gathered news, controlled, arranged cross-examinations, and in every direction, by indirect means, he sent his watchwords to the masses of the party in order to make the heads of the party face the necessity of acting and of going to the limit.

To form a correct picture of Lenin's behavior in these days we must be sure of one thing: he had unbounded faith that the masses would and could complete the revolution, but he had not the same conviction in regard to the party staff. And he realized at this time more and more clearly that there was not a minute to lose. A revolutionary situation cannot arbitrarily be maintained until the moment that the party is ready to make use of it. We had this experience in Germany not long ago.

Even a short time ago we heard the view expressed: if we had not seized the power in October, it would have happened two or three months later. A big mistake! If we had not seized the

power in October, we would not have seized it at all. Our strength before October lay in the uninterrupted influx of the masses, who believed that this party would do what the others had not done. If they had seen any vacillation at this moment on our part, any delay, any incongruity between word and deed, then in the course of two or three months they would have drifted away from us as they did formerly from the Social Revolutionaries and the Mensheviki. The bourgeoisie would have had a breathing spell and would have made use of it to conclude peace. The ratio of forces would have changed radically, and the proletarian revolution would have been postponed to an indefinite future. It was just this that made Lenin decide to act. From this sprang his uneasiness, his anxiety, his mistrust and his ceaseless hurry, that saved the revolution.

The dissensions within the party, which came to an open breach in the October days, had already appeared significantly at some stages of the revolution. The first conflict, more one of principle and yet calmly theoretic, arose immediately after Lenin's arrival in connection with his theses. The second resultless clash was connected with the armed demonstration of the 20th of April. The third hinged on the attempt at an armed demonstration on the 10th of June. The "Moderates"

believed Lenin wanted to foist upon them an armed demonstration with the aim of an uprising in the background. The next and sharper conflict flared up in connection with the July days. The differences of opinion filled the press.

A further stage in the development of the inner struggle was reached in the question of the preliminary parliament. This time the two groups came openly and sharply to blows. Was a protocol agreed to in this session? Has it been kept? I do not know. But the debates were undoubtedly of extraordinary interest. The two tendencies, one for seizing the power, the other for the rôle of opposition in the Constituent Assembly, were clearly enough defined. The advocates of the boycott of the preliminary parliament were in the minority, and yet the difference of the majority was not very great. Lenin from his hiding place reacted on the debates in the faction and on the written resolution by a letter to the Central Committee. This letter, in which Lenin declared himself in more than energetic terms with the boycotters of the Bulygin Duma<sup>1</sup> of Kerensky-Zeretely, I do not find in the second part of volume XIV of his "Collected Works." Has this extraordinarily valuable document been pre-

<sup>1</sup>In the beginning of 1905 Bulygin was commissioned by the Czar to carry out the electoral law for a duma that was to present propositions to the Czar for "benevolent consideration."



served? The differences of opinion reached their highest tension just before the October stage, when it was a question of the suspension of exchange during the uprising and the appointment of the date of the uprising. And finally, soon after the revolution of October 25th, the differences of opinion over the question of coalition with the other socialistic parties grew extraordinarily sharp.

It would be interesting to the highest degree to reconstruct concretely Lenin's rôle on the eve of April 20th, of June 10th, and of the July days. "We did stupid things in July," Lenin said later, in private conversations as well as, so far as I remember, in a conference with German delegates about the March events in Germany 1921. What were these "stupid things"? Were they the energetic, or much too energetic, method of attack and the active, or much too active, attempts to get information? Without such attempts to get information from time to time we might have lost contact with the masses. On the other hand, as is well known, active reconnoitering here and there becomes unconsciously a pitched battle. That was almost the case in July. The signal for retreat was given, however, at just the right time. And our enemy had not the courage in those days to go to extremes. This was certainly not chance;



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the Kerenskiad was in its whole being a half-measure, and this faint-hearted Kerenskiad paralyzed the Korniloviad to the degree that it feared itself.

## THE REVOLUTION

**T**OWARD the end of the "Democratic Conference," the 25th of October was set, at our insistence, as the term for the Second Congress of Soviets. In the mood that has been pictured, which increased from hour to hour, not only in the workmen's quarters, but also in the barracks, it seemed most practical to us to concentrate the attention of the Petersburg garrison on this date, as the day when the Congress of Soviets had to decide the question of power, and the workmen and troops who were already properly prepared must support the Congress. Our strategy was aggressive in its nature; we were beginning an attack on the power, but our agitation was so arranged that the enemy should set about breaking up the Congress of Soviets, and it would in consequence be necessary to oppose them with the most ruthless resistance. This whole plan was based upon the strength of the revolutionary stream which was rising high everywhere and which left the enemy neither rest nor peace. The rear-guard regiments would have preserved their neutrality in case of the worst happening to us.

Under such conditions the slightest step of the government against the Petrograd Soviet would at once assure us the decisive ascendancy. Lenin was afraid in the meantime that the enemy might succeed in bringing up small but decidedly counter-revolutionary divisions of troops and attack us first with the weapon of surprise. If the enemy suddenly got the party and the soviets in his power and seized the guiding center in Petersburg he would thereby decapitate the revolutionary movement and gradually make it harmless.

"We dare not wait, we dare not delay," Lenin repeated more and more frequently.

Under these conditions at the end of September or the beginning of October the famous night session of the Central Committee took place at Suchanof's home. Lenin came there firmly resolved this time to carry through a resolution in which there was no further place for doubt, hesitation, prolongment, passivity, and delay. However, before he attacked the opponents of the armed rising, he began to storm at those who had brought the rising into connection with the Second Congress of Soviets. Some one had told him of my speech: "We have already fixed the rising for the 25th of October." I had actually used this sentence several times to those comrades who sought the path of revolution in the preliminary

parliament and in a "vigorous" Bolshevik opposition in the Constituent Assembly. "If the Congress of Soviets, Bolshevik in its majority," I said, "does not seize the power, Bolshevism itself is condemned to death. In all probability then the Constituent Assembly would not even be convened. If, after all that has gone before, we convene the Congress of Soviets with a majority assured in advance for us, we publicly bind ourselves to seize the power not later than the 25th of October."

Vladimir Ilyich inveighed against this date horribly. The question of the Second Congress of Soviets, he said, was of no interest to him; what meaning did the Congress have? Would it actually meet? And what can the Congress itself do in this case? We must seize the power, but not bind ourselves to the Congress. It was amusing and absurd to announce to the enemy the day of the rising. It would be the best thing to let the 25th of October be a masquerade, but the rising must be begun absolutely before and independent of the Congress. The party must seize the power with armed hand and then we would discuss the Congress. We must immediately get into action.

As in the July days when Lenin definitely expected "they" would overthrow us, he thought over the whole position of the enemy and came to the conclusion that, from the standpoint of the

bourgeoisie, it would be the best thing to surprise us with arms, to disorganize the revolution and then attack it alone. As in July Lenin overestimated the sagacity and resolution of the enemy, perhaps also its material possibilities. To a considerable degree this overestimation was conscious and tactically quite right; it would double the energy of the party. But in spite of everything the party was not in a position to seize the power on its own responsibility, independent of the Congress and behind its back. That would have been a mistake that would not have been without effects upon the behavior of the workmen and could have made it extraordinarily difficult for the garrison. The soldiers knew the Council of Deputies and the soldier section. They only knew the party through the Congress. And if the rising took place back of the Congress, without connection with it, without being covered by its authority and without clearly and plainly putting an end to the struggle about the power of the Soviets, it might lead to dangerous confusion in the garrison. One must not forget also that there still existed in Petersburg, along with the local Soviet, the old All Russian Central Executive Committee with Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks at the head. We could only oppose that by the Soviet Congress.

In the end three groups were formed in the Central Committee: the opponents of the seizure of power by the party whom the logic of the situation forced to give up the rallying word, "the power to the soviets"; Lenin, who demanded the immediate organization of the rising, independent of the Soviets; and the last group who considered it necessary to bind the rising closely with the Second Council of Soviets and in consequence wished to postpone it until the latter took place.

"At all events," Lenin declared emphatically, "the conquest of power must precede the Congress of Soviets, otherwise they will drive you apart and you will not have any Congress." Finally, a resolution was passed to the effect that the rising must take place not later than the 15th of October. About the fixed date itself, as far as I remember, there was scarcely any discussion. All understood that it only bore an approximate character, an orienting one, so to speak, and that events might shift it to earlier or later. But only the question of the day could be discussed, nothing further. The necessity of a fixed date, and an early one, was quite well known.

The chief debates at the sessions of the Central Committee were naturally devoted to the struggle with that section of the members who were totally opposed to an armed rising. I refrain from intro-



ducing here the three or four speeches that Lenin made at the sessions above mentioned on the theme: Must we seize the power? Is it the time to seize the power? Shall we keep the power if we seize it? Lenin wrote then and later some pamphlets and articles about this. His train of thought in the speeches at the meetings was naturally the same. But it is utterly impossible to picture the united spirit of these intense and impassioned improvisations which were filled with the struggle to impress upon the opponents, the hesitating and the doubting, the course of his thought, his will, his conviction, and his courage. Here the fate of the revolution was decided. The session broke up late at night. All felt somewhat as though they had gone through a surgical operation. Part of those present at the session, I among them, passed the rest of the night in Suchanof's home.

The further course of events helped us much. The attempt to change the Petersburg garrison led to the creation of the Revolutionary Military Committee. It was possible for us to legalize the preparation for the rising through the authority of the Soviet and to tie it up closely with the question which concerned the vital force of the whole Petersburg garrison.

In the interval between the session of the Cen-

tral Committee above described and the 25th of October I recall only one meeting with Vladimir Ilyich and this only dimly. When did it occur? It must have been between the 15th and 20th of October. I know that I was much interested to see how Lenin would look upon the "defensive" character of my speech at the session of the Petersburg Soviet. I had proved to be false the rumors that we were preparing for the 22nd of October, the "day of the Petrograd Soviet," an armed rising, and I announced that we would answer any attack with a decided counter-blow and go the extreme. I remember that Vladimir Ilyich's mood was calmer and steadier, I might say, less suspicious. He not only made no objections to the openly defensive tone of my speech, but even recognized it as quite efficacious in putting to sleep the carefulness of the opposition. None the less he shook his head from time to time and asked: "But will they not steal a march on us? Will they not surprise us?" I pointed out that afterward everything would follow almost automatically. At this meeting or at least a portion of it I think Comrade Stalin was present. Perhaps I am confusing two meetings. I must say in general that the recollections that have stayed in my memory with regard to the last days before the revolution are so mixed that I can only separate them,

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analyze them, and arrange them in order with much difficulty.

The next time I met Lenin was the very day of October 25th at Smolny itself. At what time? I no longer have any idea. It must have been toward evening. I remember well that Vladimir Ilyich at once asked anxiously about the negotiations that we were carrying on with the staff of the Petersburg military district about the further fate of the garrison. A communication had appeared in the newspapers that the negotiations were approaching a favorable end.

"Are you agreeing to a compromise?" asked Lenin and looked at me piercingly.

I told him that we had purposely given this calming news to the press, and that it was only a stratagem for the moment of beginning the general attack.

"Well, that is g-o-o-d," said Lenin, drawling his words, full of joy and enthusiasm. He rubbed his hands in excitement and began to pace up and down the room. "That is v-e-r-y good!" Ilyich liked the stratagem especially. To take in the enemy, to get the best of him,—was there anything better than that?

But in the given case the stratagem had quite peculiar significance: it showed that we had already entered directly into the zone of decisive

actions. I began to tell him that the military operations were succeeding rather widely, and that at the moment we had already taken possession of a number of important points in the city. Vladimir Ilyich had seen on a placard printed the evening before—or perhaps I showed it to him, too,—that every one who attempted to make use of the revolution for plundering was threatened with execution on the spot. At first Lenin was thoughtful; it even seemed to me as though he felt misgivings about it. But then he said, “R-i-g-h-t.”

He greedily examined all details of the rising. They furnished him with the indisputable evidence that the affair was in full swing, the Rubicon passed, and that no recall and no retreat were possible now. I remember the strong impression made upon Lenin by the news that, by written command, I had ordered out a company of the Pavlovsky regiment in order to assure the appearance of our party and Soviet newspapers.

“Has the company marched out?”

“It has.”

“And the newspapers are set up?”

“Yes, indeed.”

Lenin was delighted, which he showed by exclamations, laughter, and by rubbing his hands.

I realized that, at this moment, at last he had made his peace with our refusal to seize the power

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by a conspiracy. Up to the last hour he had feared the enemy might thwart our plans and surprise us. Only now, on the evening of the 25th of October, he composed himself and gave his sanction finally to the course that events had taken. I say "he composed himself,"—but only to again get excited over a whole mass of questions, more and more concrete, big and little, that were connected with the further course of the uprising: "But listen, ought we not do so and so? Ought we not undertake that and that? Ought we not bring up this and that?" These endless questions and suggestions were superficially without any connection, but they had their origin in one and the same intense inner comprehension, which had grasped at once the whole extent of the uprising.

One must stop trying not to hasten too quickly into the events of the revolution. When the revolutionary stream mounts steadily, and the forces of the uprising grow automatically, while those of the reaction waver according to fate and fall to pieces, the temptation is very near to yield to the elementary course of events. Quick success disarms as much as defeat. One dare not lose sight of the clew to the events. After every new success one must say: Nothing is yet attained, nothing is yet assured; five minutes before the decisive victory the direction of events requires the same



vigilance and the same energy and the same force as five minutes before the beginning of armed actions; five minutes after the victory, before the first exclamations of greeting have calmed down, one must say to himself: What has been conquered is not yet assured, there is not a minute to lose. That was Lenin's grasp of the situation, his way of action and method, the organic essence of his political character, of his revolutionary spirit.

I have already told once how Dan, on the way to a partial-session of the Mensheviki, recognized Lenin in disguise at the Second Congress of Soviets, as he sat with us at a little table in a passageway. This subject has been preserved in a picture, which, so far as I can judge from the reproduction, has nothing in common with the reality of the time. That is, however, the fate of historical painting in general and not its fate alone.

I no longer remember on what occasion, but at all events, considerably later, I said to Vladimir Ilyich: "This ought to be sketched, or they will lie about it."

Jokingly he made a hopeless gesture: "They will lie in spite of that, without stopping . . ."

The first session of the Second Council of Soviets took place in Smolny. Lenin was not present at it. He remained in his room at Smolny,



which, according to my recollection, had no, or almost no, furniture. Later some one spread rugs on the floor and laid two cushions on them. Vladimir Ilyich and I lay down to rest. But in a few minutes I was called: "Dan is speaking; you must answer." When I came back after my reply, I again lay down near Vladimir Ilyich, who naturally could not sleep. It would not have been possible. Every five or ten minutes some one came running in from the session hall to inform us what was going on there. In addition, messengers came from the city, where, under the leadership of Antonof-Ovsejenko, the siege of the Winter Palace was going on which ended with its capture.

It must have been the next morning, for a sleepless night separated it from the preceding day. Vladimir Ilyich looked tired. He smiled and said: "The transition from the state of illegality, being driven in every direction, to power—is too rough." "It makes one dizzy," he at once added in German, and made the sign of the cross before his face. After this one more or less personal remark that I heard him make about the acquisition of power, he went about the tasks of the day.

## BREST-LITOVSK

**W**E began peace negotiations in the hope of arousing the workmen's party of Germany and Austria-Hungary as well as of the Entente countries. For this reason we were obliged to delay the negotiations as long as possible to give the European workman time to understand the main fact of the Soviet revolution itself and particularly its peace policy. After the first break in the negotiations Lenin suggested that I go to Brest-Litovsk. In itself the prospect of treating with Baron Kühlmann and General Hoffmann was not attractive, but "in order to delay the proceedings there must be some one to do the delaying," as Lenin expressed it. In Smolny there was a brief exchange of views on the general character of the negotiations. The question whether we should sign or not was postponed for a time; we could not tell how things would go, nor how they would react in Europe, nor what situation might arise. And naturally we had not given up hope of a rapid revolutionary development.

That we could no longer fight was perfectly clear to me. When I passed through the trenches

on my way to Brest-Litovsk the first time, our comrades, in spite of all advances and encouragement, were quite unable to organize any significant demonstration of protest against the enormous demands of Germany; the trenches were almost empty—no one ventured to speak even conditionally of a continuation of the war. Peace, peace at any price! . . . Later, on my return from Brest-Litovsk, I tried to persuade the president of the military section of the All Russian Central Executive Committee to support our delegation by a “patriotic” speech. “Impossible!” he exclaimed, “quite impossible; we cannot return to the trenches; we would not be understood; we would lose all influence.” As to the impossibility of a revolutionary war, there was not the slightest difference of opinion between Vladimir Ilyich and myself.

But there was the other question: Can the Germans still fight? Are they in a position to begin an attack on the revolution that will explain the cessation of the war? How can we find out the state of mind of the German soldiers, how fathom it? What effect has the February revolution and later the October revolution had upon them? The January strike in Germany showed that the break had begun. But how deep was it? Must we not try to put this alternative before the German work-

men and the German army: on the one hand, the workmen's revolution declaring the war ended; on the other, the Hohenzollern government that orders an attack on this revolution?

"That is naturally very attractive," Lenin answered. "And certainly such questioning would not be without effect. But it is risky, very risky. Suppose German militarism is strong enough, which is very probable, to begin the offensive against us—what then? We dare not risk it; for the moment our revolution is the most important thing in the world."

The breaking up of the Constituent Assembly at first seriously harmed our international position. From the beginning the Germans had been afraid we might come to an agreement with the "patriotic" Constituent Assembly and that this might lead to an attempt to continue the war. A rash decision in this direction would have ruined finally the revolution and the country; but that would only have manifested itself later, and have required a new effort on the part of the Germans. The dissolution of the Constituent Assembly meant for the Germans our avowed readiness to end the war at any price. Kühlmann's tone became more brutal at once. What impression would the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly make upon the proletariat of the Entente countries? The answer

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was not difficult: the Entente press described the Soviet régime as nothing but an agent of the Hohenzollerns. And now the Bolsheviki break up the "democratic" Constituent Assembly in order to make a servile peace with the Hohenzollerns at a time when Belgium and the north of France are occupied by German troops. It was a matter of course that the Entente bourgeoisie would succeed in sowing much discord in the rank and file of workmen. And that would consequently facilitate the military intervention of the Entente against us. As is well known, even in Germany among the Social Democratic Opposition, there were stubborn rumors current that the Bolsheviki were bought by the German government and that what was going on in Brest-Litovsk was merely a comedy with the rôles allotted in advance. This version must be more credited in France and England. It was my opinion that, cost what it might, before the signing of peace we must give the workmen of Europe a clear proof of the deadly enmity between us and governmental Germany. It was these very considerations that on my arrival in Brest-Litovsk suggested the idea of that "pedagogical" demonstration, that was expressed in the form: We shall stop the war but without signing the peace treaty. I conferred with the other members of the delegation, found them in sympathy

with the suggestion, and wrote about it to Vladimir Ilyich. His answer was: "If you come here we will talk it over." Possibly this answer already showed that he did not agree with my proposition; at the moment I do not remember clearly and have not the letter at hand; indeed, I am not sure that I kept it. When I reached Smolny long discussions took place between us.

"That is all very attractive, and could not be better if General Hoffmann were unable to march his troops against us. But there is little hope of that. He will send specially chosen regiments of Bavarian peasants, and what then? You have said yourself that the trenches are empty. And suppose he begins the war again in spite of everything?"

"Then we would be forced to sign the peace treaty, and it would be clear to every one that we had no other way out. By that alone we would strike a decisive blow at the legend that we are in league with the Hohenzollern behind the scenes."

"Naturally there is much to be said for that but, after all, it is too bold. For the moment our revolution is more important than everything else; we must make it sure, cost what it may."

To these main difficulties of the question were added exceptional ones within the party itself. In the party, at least in its leading elements, there



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was a strong disinclination to sign the Brest conditions. The news about the negotiations published in our papers fed and strengthened this feeling. It was most clearly expressed by that Left communistic grouping which advanced the solution of a revolutionary war. This situation naturally disturbed Lenin greatly.

"If the Central Committee decides to sign the German terms only under the pressure of a verbal ultimatum," I said, "we risk a split in the party. Our party needs a disclosure of the actual state of affairs no less than the workmen of Europe. If we break with the Left, the party will make a decided curve to the Right. It is an undeniable fact that all the comrades who were against the October revolution or were for a bloc with the socialist parties would be unconditionally for the Brest-Litovsk peace. And our tasks are not finished with the conclusion of peace. Among the Left Communists are many who played an active rôle in the October period," etc.

"That is all indisputable," Vladimir Ilyich answered. "But for the moment the question is the fate of the revolution. We can restore balance in the party. But before everything else we must save the revolution, and we can only save it by signing the peace terms. Better a split than the danger of a military overthrow of the revolution.

The Lefts will cease raging and then—even if it comes to a split, which is not inevitable—return to the party. On the other hand, if the Germans conquer us, not one of us returns. Very well. Let us admit your plan is accepted. We refuse to sign the peace treaty. And the Germans at once attack. What will you do then?”

“We will sign the peace terms under bayonets. Then the picture will be clear to the workmen of the whole world.”

“But you will not support the solution of a revolutionary war?”

“Under no circumstances.”

“With this understanding the experiment is probably not so dangerous. We risk the loss of Esthonia and Letvia. Some Esthonian comrades came to see me recently and told me how splendidly the peasants had begun the socialist structure. It is a great pity if we must sacrifice socialist Esthonia,” Lenin said jokingly, “but for the sake of a good peace it is worth while agreeing to a compromise.”

“But in case of immediate signing of peace would the possibility of a German military intervention in Esthonia and Letvia be out of the question?”

“Let us admit it is possible, but in any case it is only a possibility, while this is almost a certainty.

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In any case, I stand for the immediate signing of peace; it is safer."

Lenin's chief fear concerning my plan was that in case of a renewal of the German attack we might have no time to sign the treaty; that is, that German militarism would leave us no time. "This beast springs suddenly," Vladimir Ilyich often remarked. In the conferences about the peace question Lenin opposed the Left with great decision, and my proposal discreetly and calmly. He concealed his ill humor and seemed reconciled, especially as the party was openly against signing and the intermediate solution would be a bridge to the signing. A conference of the best known Bolsheviks—delegates to the third Congress of Soviets—proved without a doubt that our party, that had just gone through the fiery furnace of October, needed control of the international situation through action. If we had not had an intermediate formula the majority would have voted for the revolutionary war.

It is perhaps not without interest to remark here that the Left Social Revolutionaries did not at once come out against the Brest-Litovsk peace. At least Spiridonova was at first a decided advocate of the ratification. "The peasant does not want war," she declared, "and will accept any peace whatever." "Sign the peace at once," she said to

me at my first return from Brest, "and annul the grain monopoly." Thereupon the Left Social Revolutionaries supported the intermediate formula of the cessation of war without signing the treaty, but as a stage to revolutionary war—"in any event."

It is well known how the German delegation reacted to this declaration, that Germany would not answer by renewing military action. With this decision we returned to Moscow.

"Won't they deceive us?" Lenin asked.

We made an uncertain gesture. It does not seem so.

"Very well," said Lenin, "if it is so, so much the better. We have kept our face and we are out of the war."

Two days before the expiration of the truce we received a telegram from General Samoilo, who had remained in Brest, that, according to the declaration of General Hoffmann, the Germans considered themselves at war with us from February 18th at 12 o'clock and had therefore requested him to leave Brest-Litovsk. Vladimir Ilyich received the telegram first. I was with him in his office. We were talking with Karelin and another Left Social Revolutionary. Lenin handed me the telegram in silence. I remember his look which made me feel at once that the telegram contained impor-

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tant and unfavorable news. Lenin hastily finished the conversation with the Social Revolutionary in order to consider the new situation.

"That means they have deceived us and gained five days. . . . This beast lets nothing escape it. There is nothing for us to do but sign the old conditions if the Germans still agree to them."

I replied that we must let Hoffmann make an actual attack.

"But that means giving up Düna-burg, losing a lot of artillery, etc.?"

"Naturally, it means new sacrifices. But they are necessary so that the German soldier enters Soviet territory in actual fighting. They are necessary so that the German workman on one hand and the French and English workman on the other may understand."

"No," Lenin answered. "Naturally it is not a question of Düna-burg. But there is not an hour to lose. The trial is a failure. Hoffmann will and can fight. To delay is impossible; they have already taken five days from us that I counted on. And this beast springs quickly."

The Central Committee decided to send a telegram at once that expressed our willingness to sign the Brest-Litovsk treaty. So the necessary telegram was dispatched.

"I believe," I said in a private conversation with

Vladimir Ilyich, "it would be politically opportune if I resign as People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs."

"Why? We don't want to introduce these parliamentary methods."

"But my resignation would give the Germans the impression of a radical change in our policy and strengthen their trust in our actual readiness to sign and keep the treaty."

"Perhaps," said Lenin thoughtfully; "that is a weighty political argument."

I no longer remember at what moment the news of the landing of German troops in Finland and the immediate victory over the Finnish workmen arrived. I only know that I met Vladimir Ilyich in the corridor not far from his office. He was greatly excited. I have never seen him like that either before or since.

"Yes," he said, "we must fight openly, even if it is to no purpose. For there is no other way out this time."

That was Lenin's first reaction to the telegram about the overthrow of the Finnish revolution. But ten or fifteen minutes later when I entered his office he said: "No, we dare not change our policy. Our entering would not save revolutionary Finland, but would certainly ruin us. We shall support the Finnish workmen as best we can, with-



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out, however, departing from the basis of peace. I do not know if this will save us. But in any case it is the only way in which deliverance is possible."

And deliverance actually came this way.

The decision not to sign the peace treaty did not arise, as is so often said, from the abstract consideration that an agreement between us and the Imperialists was unthinkable. One has only to look up in Comrade Ovsiannikof's little book the voting arranged by Lenin on this question, which proved helpful to the highest degree, in order to be convinced that the advocates of the trial formula "neither war nor peace" answered "yes" to the question whether we, as the revolutionary party, were justified, under certain conditions, in making a "disgraceful peace." We actually said: If there were only twenty-five chances in a hundred that the Hohenzollern would not decide to fight us, or was in no position to do so, we must make the attempt, even with a certain risk, to sign the treaty.

Three years later we ventured—at Lenin's initiative this time—to test Poland of the bourgeoisie and nobles with the bayonet. We were repulsed. Where is the difference between this and Brest-

Litovsk? There is no difference in principle, but there is in the degree of risk.

I remember that Comrade Radek once wrote that the strength of Lenin's tactical mind was most clearly evident in the time between the Brest-Litovsk peace and the march on Warsaw. Now we all know that this Polish advance was a mistake that has cost us very dear. It not only led to the peace of Riga that cut us off from Germany, but with numerous other events of the same period, it gave a powerful impulse to the consolidation of the bourgeoisie of Europe. The counter-revolutionary significance of the Riga treaty for the fate of Europe can be best understood if you picture the situation in 1923, under the supposition that we had had a common frontier with Germany; everything seems to show that the development of events in Germany would have followed quite a different course. It is undoubtedly true that the revolutionary movement in Poland itself would have turned out more favorably without our military intervention and its failure. As far as I know Lenin himself lays great stress upon the Warsaw mistake. Nevertheless Radek was quite right in his estimate of Lenin's tactical span. Naturally after we had tested the working masses of Poland without the desired results, after we were repulsed and had to be repulsed, for in the event of Poland

remaining quiet, our march on Warsaw was only a partisan affair; after we were obliged to sign the Riga peace treaty—it was not hard to conclude that those who opposed the advance were right, that it would have been better to stand aside and make sure the common boundary with Germany. All this only became clear later. The boldness of Lenin's thought in the idea of the Warsaw advance is remarkable. The risk was great, but the goal was greater. The chance of the plan's failing involved no danger for the existence of the Soviet Republic itself, but only a weakening. We can leave it to the future historian to judge whether it was worth while risking the degradation of the terms of the Brest-Litovsk treaty for the sake of a demonstration for the workmen of Europe. But it is quite clear that after this demonstration the peace terms forced upon us had to be signed under compulsion. And here the exactness of Lenin's position and his powerful urging saved the situation.

“Suppose the Germans attack anyway: Suppose they march on Moscow?” some one asked.

“Then we will withdraw to the east, to the Urals, and declare anew that we are ready to sign the treaty. The Kusnetsky basin is rich in coal. We will form a Ural-Kusnetsky Republic based on the industry of the Ural and the coal of the Kus-

netsky basin, on the proletariat of the Ural and the Moscow and Petersburg workmen we can take with us. If need be we can go further east, beyond the Ural mountains. We will go to Kamtchatka but we will stand together. The international situation will change a dozen times, and we will enlarge the borders of the Ural-Kusnetsky Republic again and return to Moscow and Petersburg. But if we now thoughtlessly involve ourselves in a revolutionary war and lose the flower of the workmen and our party, naturally we can never return."

The Ural-Kusnetsky Republic took up a good deal of space in Lenin's arguments at this time. Repeatedly he disarmed opponents with the question: "Do you know that we have immense coal fields in the Kusnetsky basin? By combining the Ural metals and the Siberian wheat we have a new basis." The opponent who did not always know just where the Kusnetsky basin was, and what connection the coal there had with the future of Bolshevism and the revolutionary war, looked astonished or laughed in surprise and took it as half a joke, half a trick on Lenin's part. In reality Lenin was by no means joking, but—true to himself—had considered the situation in all its issues and the worst practical results. The conception of the Ural-Kusnetsky Republic was or-

ganically necessary for him to strengthen his own conviction and that of others that nothing was yet lost and that a strategy of doubt was not in place nor ever could be.

As is well known it never did come to the Ural-Kusnetsky Republic, and it is good that it did not. But nevertheless it can be said that the undeveloped Ural-Kusnetsky Republic saved the R. S. F. S. R.

At all events the Brest-Litovsk tactics can only be understood and appraised when you connect them with Lenin's October tactics. To be opposed to the October revolution and for Brest was really in both cases the expression of one and the same mood of capitulation. The characteristic thing is that after the capitulation of Brest-Litovsk Lenin displayed the same inexhaustible revolutionary energy that had assured victory for the party in October. Just this natural organic connection of the October revolution with Brest, the combination of gigantic energy with bold foresight, of urging without losing the sense of proportion, provides the measure for Lenin's method and Lenin's strength.

## BREAKING UP THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

A FEW days, if not hours, after the October revolution, Lenin raised the question of the Constituent Assembly.

"We must postpone the elections," he declared. "We must enlarge the suffrage by giving it to those who are eighteen years old. We must make possible a new arrangement of the electoral lists. Our own lists are worthless, a crowd of intellectuals who have hastened here, while we need the workmen and peasants. The Kornilof men and the Cadets we must declare outside the law."

The answer was, "Postponement is unfavorable just now. It will be looked upon as a liquidation of the Constituent Assembly the more so because we ourselves reproached the Provisional Government with putting off the Constituent Assembly."

"Ah, that is folly," Lenin replied. "Bring up important facts, not words. As far as the Provisional Government is concerned the Constituent Assembly would have meant a step forward, or at least might have meant it; as far as the Soviet power is concerned, and especially with



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the present electoral lists, it will unquestionably mean a step backwards. Why is postponement unfavorable now? And if the Constituent Assembly is Cadet, Menshevist Social Revolutionary, —is that favorable?"

"But we shall be stronger then," others demurred. "For the moment we are still too weak. In the country they know almost nothing of the Soviet power. And if the news penetrates there now, that we have postponed the Constituent Assembly it would weaken us still more." Sverdlof, who had more connection with the country than any of us, was particularly opposed to a postponement of the elections.

Lenin kept to his position without any support. He shook his head in dissatisfaction and repeated, "It is a mistake, an open mistake, that may cost us very dear! If it only does not cost the revolution its head. . . ."

When, however, the decision—not to postpone! —was made, Lenin gave his whole attention to the organizing measures connected with the meeting of the Constituent Assembly.

It turned out that we would be in the minority, even with the entrance of the Left Social Revolutionaries, who figured on the same lists with the Rights and were quite overcome with illusions.

"Naturally we must break up the Constituent

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Assembly," said Lenin, "but then what about the Left Social Revolutionaries?"

Old Natanson comforted us very much. He came to us "to talk it over," and after the first words said, "Well, as far as I am concerned, if it comes to that point, break up the Constituent Assembly with force."

"Bravo," exclaimed Lenin with joy, "what is right, must remain right. But will your party agree?"

"Some of us are wavering, but I believe that in the end they will agree," Natanson answered.

The Left Social Revolutionaries were at that time in the honeymoon of the most extreme radicalism and actually did agree. "But if we cannot act so," Natanson suggested, "we will unite your faction and ours of the Constituent Assembly in a Central Executive Committee, and in this way form a convention."

"Why?" Lenin replied, visibly annoyed. "To imitate the French revolution, is that it? By breaking up the Constituent Assembly we confirm the Soviet system. But your plan would put everything in confusion: neither one thing nor another."

Natanson attempted to prove that, by his plan, we would concentrate on ourselves a part of the authority of the Constituent Assembly, but he soon yielded.

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Lenin occupied himself intensively with the question of the constituents.

"It is an open mistake," he said. "We have already gained the power and now we have put ourselves in a situation that forces military measures upon us to gain the power anew."

He carried on the preparatory work with the greatest care, weighed all the details, and subjected Urizky, who to his great sorrow had been appointed commissar of the Constituent Assembly, to a painful examination. Among other things Lenin ordered the transfer to Petrograd of one of the Lettish regiments consisting almost entirely of workingmen.

"The peasant may hesitate in this case," he said. "Proletarian decision is necessary here."

The Bolshevik deputies of the Constituent Assembly came from all ends of Russia and, at Lenin's insistence and Sverdlof's direction, were assigned to the factories, industrial works, and army corps. They formed an important element in the organizing apparatus of the "Supplementary Revolution" of January 5th. As for the Social Revolutionaries and deputies, they considered it incompatible with the rank of a people's elector to take part in the struggle: "The people have chosen us; let them defend us."

In the nature of the thing these little citizens

from the province did not know at all what they should do; the greater part was simply afraid. But they carefully prepared the ritual for the first meeting. They brought candles with them in case the Bolsheviki cut off the electric light, and a vast number of sandwiches in case their food be taken from them. Thus democracy entered upon the struggle with dictatorship heavily armed with sandwiches and candles. The people did not give a thought to supporting those who considered themselves their elect, and who in reality were only shadows of a period of the revolution that was already past.

During the liquidation of the Constituent Assembly, I was in Brest-Litovsk. But when I came back to Petrograd the next time for a conference Lenin said to me about the breaking up of the Constituent Assembly, "Naturally it was a great risk on our part that we did not postpone the convention—very, very unwise. But in the end it is best that it happened so. \ The breaking up of the Constituent Assembly by the Soviet power is the complete and public liquidation of formal democracy in the name of the revolutionary dictatorship. It will be a good lesson."

Thus theoretical generalization went hand in hand with the transfer of the Lettish guard regiment. It was then undoubtedly that those ideas

took shape in Lenin's consciousness which he formulated later at the first congress of the Communist Internationals in his remarkable theses about democracy.

The critique of formal democracy has a long history. The character of mediocrity of the 1848 revolution is explained by us and our predecessors by the breakdown of political democracy. It was succeeded by "social" democracy. But bourgeois society understood how to force it to take the place that pure democracy could no longer maintain. Political history went through a tiresome period in which social democracy lived on the critique of pure democracy, while it actually fulfilled the obligations of the latter and was carried through with its deficiencies. That happened which history has so often shown: the opposition was called to a conservative solution of the tasks which the compromised powers of the day before could not manage. From the circumstance of the transient preparation of the proletarian dictatorship democracy became the highest criterion, the last resort, the inviolable sanctuary, that is the last hypocrisy of bourgeois society. This is what happened to us. After the fatal material blow in October the bourgeoisie attempted a resurrection in January in the shadowy consecrated Constituent Assembly. The further victorious development of the pro-

letarian revolution after the simple, open, brutal breaking-up of the Constituent Assembly dealt formal democracy a finishing stroke from which it has never recovered. For that reason Lenin was right when he said: "In the end, it was best that it happened so."

In the form of the Social Revolutionary constituency the February Republic had a chance to die a second time.

On the background of my general impression of official Russia of February, of the Menshevist Social Revolutionary Petrograd Soviet of that time, there stands out as clearly as though it were yesterday the face of a certain Social Revolutionary delegate. I did not know and do not know yet to-day who he was nor where he came from. He must have come from the country. Outwardly he resembled a young teacher, a former worthy seminarist. A flat-nosed, spectacled face, almost beardless, with prominent cheek-bones. It was at the same meeting at which the socialist ministers presented themselves to the Soviet. Tchernof, verbose, emotional, feeble, coquettish, and above all sickening, explained why he and the others had entered the government and what beneficial results that entailed. I remember a stupid phrase the speaker repeated a dozen times: "You have



brought us into the government, you can also get us out." The seminarist looked at the speaker with eyes of intense adoration. So must a faithful pilgrim feel and look when in a renowned cloister he has the good fortune to hear the exhortation of a pious priest. The speech flowed on endlessly, the room showed signs of weariness, slight noises were heard. But for the seminarist the sources of reverent delight did not seem to be exhausted.

"Yes, this is the way it looks, our revolution, or rather theirs," I said to myself, when I saw and heard for the first time this Soviet of 1917.

When Tchernof finished his speech there was stormy applause. In one corner the few Bolshéviki talked discontentedly. This group suddenly arose from the collective background when they gave friendly support to my criticism of the defensive war ministerialism of the Mensheviki and Social Revolutionaries.

The devout seminarist was frightened and disturbed to the highest degree. Not indignant: in those days he did not yet dare to feel indignation at an exile who had come back to his home. But he could not understand how any one could be opposed to a fact so gratifying and admirable in every way as Tchernof's entry in the provisional government. He sat a few steps from me and on his countenance, which served me as a barometer

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of the assembly, surprise and terror struggled with the reverence that had not yet entirely disappeared. This face has always clung to my memory as an image of the February revolution—its best image, coming from the ranks, little citizen seminarist, for it had another worse one, that of Dan and Tchernof.

Not in vain and not by chance was Tchernof president of the Constituent Assembly. February Russia, dully revolutionary, still half illusionistic, republican-daring as it was, and oh, at one time how simple! and ah, at another, how crafty! had raised him up. . . . At the election the peasant had snatched up the Tchernofs by means of the devout seminarists and put them in a high position. And Tchernof had accepted this mandate not without race grace and race cunning.

For Tchernof (for I am going to speak of that too) was in his way also national. I say "also" because four years ago I had to write about nationalism in Lenin. The comparison or even the indirect approach of these two figures may seem unsuitable. And it would indeed be wrong and unseemly if it were a question of the men themselves. But here it is a question of the national "elements," of their embodiment and reflection. Tchernof embodies the epigone of the old intel-

lectual revolutionary tradition, Lenin, on the other hand, its consummation and complete victory.

Among the old intelligentsia the noble had his seat and prated contritely and fluently of duty to the people; and so also the pious seminarist, who from his father's little room, lighted by the sacred lamps, had opened a little window, a mere chink, into the world of critical thinking, and the enlightened peasant who wavered between socialization and separate ownership, and the simple workingman who had strayed among the students, was separated from his own kind, and was not in touch with the strangers. This is all contained in the Tchernoviad, and its fulsome eloquence, formlessness, and restless mediocrity. Of the old intellectual idealism of the time of Sophie Perovskaja there is nothing left in the Tchernoviad. In place of that is something of the new Russia of the industrialists and merchants, especially of the kind, "if you do not cheat, you do not sell."

In the development of the Russian social thought of his time Herzen was an important and forceful figure. But put him back even a half century, strip away the rainbow feathers of his talent, transform him into his own epigone, and put him before the background of the years 1905-1917, and you have the element of the Tcher-

noviad. With Tchernichevsky an operation of this kind is harder to carry out, but the Tchernoviad contains for him too, elements for caricature. The connection with Michailovsky is very direct, for in Michailovsky himself the epigone character already predominated. The peasant element was the foundation of the Tchernoviad as of our whole development, but reflected in the small bourgeoisie, immature, half intellectual, from the town and country, or in the over-ripe and bitter intelligentsia. The culmination of the Tchernoviad was necessarily a fleeting moment. While the impulse which the soldier, workman and peasant had given at the February uprising, spread through the one year-volunteers, the seminarists, students, and advocates, through the liaison-commissions and all other possible subtleties, and raised the Tchernofs to democratic heights, in the depths the decisive breach had already been made and the democratic heights hung in the air. For this reason the whole Tchernoviad between February and October, concentrated on the adjuration: "Delay, oh moment, thou art so beautiful." But the moment did not delay. The soldier became "Satan," the peasant succeeded beyond all bounds, and even the seminarist made amends for his February devotion, and the end was that the Tchernoviad dropped the folds of its toga and

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fell awkwardly from the heights of fancy into the actual mire.

The peasant element is the basis of Leninism so far as it is the basis of the Russian proletariat and our whole history. Happily, there is in our history not only passivity and enthusiasm, but also movement. The peasant has not only prejudices, but also discernment. All the traits of activity, courage, hatred of force and power, scorn of weakness, in a word, all those elements of movement that are manifest in the course of social transitions and the dynamics of class struggle, have found their expression in Bolshevism. The peasant element is reflected here by the proletariat, by the strongest dynamic force in our history, and not alone in ours, and Lenin gave legitimate expression to this refraction. And so in this sense Lenin is the leader of the national element. The Tchernoviad reflects the same national peasant element, but not from the head—particularly not from the head.

The tragicomic episode of January 5th, 1918 (breaking up the Constituent Assembly) was the last conflict of principles of Leninism with the Tchernoviad. But only of principles, for practically there was no conflict, but only a small and miserable demonstration of the rear-guard of "democracy," departing from the scene armed

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with candles and sandwiches. The heralded stories burst to pieces, the cheap decorations were pulled down, the bombastic moral strength proved itself foolish weakness. Finis!



## FORMING THE GOVERNMENT

THE power in Petersburg was won. Therefore it was a question of forming the government.

"What name shall we use?" Lenin considered aloud. "Not minister, that is a repulsive, worn-out designation."

"We might say commissars," I suggested, "but there are too many commissars now. Perhaps chief commissar. . . . No, 'chief' sounds bad. What about people's commissars?" . . .

"People's Commissars? As for me, I like it. And the government as a whole?"

"Council of People's Commissars?"

"Council of People's Commissars," Lenin repeated. "That is splendid. That smells of revolution."

I remember this last expression literally.<sup>1</sup>

Behind the scenes tedious discussions went on with Wikshel, the Left Social Revolutionaries, and others. I can give little information on this subject. I only remember Lenin's furious indigna-

<sup>1</sup>Comrade Milutin has told this story differently; but the above seems to me more correct. At all events Lenin's words: "That smells of revolution" had to do with my suggestion to call the government as a whole: "Council of People's Commissars."

tion at Wikshel's shameless demands, and his no less furious indignation at those among us who were impressed by these demands. But we continued the discussions for, as things stood, we had to reckon with Wikshel.

At Comrade Kamenief's initiative the law introduced by Kerensky about the death penalty for soldiers was repealed. I no longer remember exactly where Kamenief made this motion; but probably in the Revolutionary Military Committee and apparently on the very morning of the 25th of October. I remember that it occurred in my presence and that I made no objections. Lenin was not yet there. It was evidently before his arrival in Smolny. When he learned of this first legislative act his anger knew no bounds.

"That is madness," he repeated. "How can we accomplish a revolution without shooting? Do you think you can settle with your enemies if you disarm? What repressive measures have you then? Imprisonment? Who pays any attention to that in a time of bourgeois war when every party hopes for victory?"

Kamenief tried to show that it was only a question of the repeal of the death penalty that Kerensky had introduced especially for deserting soldiers. But Lenin was not to be appeased. It was clear to him that this decree did not mean a

cessation of the unheard of difficulties that we faced.

"It is a mistake," he repeated, "an inadmissible weakness. Pacifist illusion. . . ." He proposed changing the decree at once. We told him this would make an extraordinarily unfavorable impression. Finally some one said: "the best thing is to resort to shooting only when there is no other way." And it was left at that.

The bourgeois Social Revolutionary Menshevist press, from the first days after the revolution, formed a unanimous chorus of wolves, jackals, and mad dogs. The "Novoe Vremya" tried to strike a "loyal" tone and dropped its tail between its legs.

"Shall we not tame this pack?" Vladimir Ilyich asked at every opportunity. "For God's sake, what kind of dictatorship is that!"

The newspapers had taken up especially the words "steal the stolen" and distorted it in all ways, in proverbs, poems and feuilletons.

"And now they won't let go of this 'steal the stolen,'" Lenin once said in comic despair.

"From whom did these words come?" I asked. "Or are they invented?"

"No, I once actually said them," Lenin answered. "I said it and forgot it, and they have made a whole program out of it." And he made a joking gesture.

## FORMING THE GOVERNMENT

Every one who knows anything about Lenin knows very well that one of his strongest sides was the ability to separate the essence of a thing from its form. But this does not contradict in any way the fact that he valued the form also extraordinarily, for he knew the power of the formal on the mind, and thereby changed the formal into the material. From the moment that the Provisional Government was overthrown Lenin officiated as the government in large things as well as small. We had as yet no apparatus; connection with the country was lacking; the employees were on strike; Wikshel cut the telephone connection with Moscow; we had neither money nor an army. But Lenin took hold of absolutely everything by means of statutes, decrees, and commands in the name of the government. Naturally he was further removed than any one from a superstitious adherence to formal oaths. He had recognized too clearly that our power lay in the new state apparatus which was built up by the masses, by the Petrograd districts. But to combine the work coming from above, from the abandoned or wrecked government offices, with the productive work from below, this tone of formal energy was necessary, the tone of a government that to-day is a mere idea, but to-morrow or the day after will be the power and consequently must act to-day as the power. This

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formalism was also necessary to discipline our own brotherhood. Over the stormy element, over the revolutionary improvisations of the foremost proletarian groups, were gradually spun the threads of a government apparatus.

Lenin's office and mine in Smolny were in opposite ends of the building. The corridor that connected us, or rather separated us, was so long that Vladimir Ilyich laughingly suggested establishing a bicycle connection. We were connected by telephone and sailors were constantly running in bringing important notices from Lenin. On little slips of paper were two or three expressive sentences, each categorically formulated, the most important words two or three times underlined, and at the end a question that was also direct to the point. Several times a day I went through the endless corridor, that resembled a bee-hive, to Vladimir Ilyich's room. Military questions were the center of the conversations. The work for the Foreign Ministry I had left entirely to Comrades Markin and Salkind. I confined myself to drawing up a few agitational notes and to seeing a few people.

The German attack presented the most difficult problems, which we had no means of solving, and also not the slightest idea how we should find these means, nor how we should create them. The

draft written by me: "The socialist fatherland is in danger," was discussed with the Left Social Revolutionaries. As recruits of internationalism the title of the appeal alarmed the latter. On the other hand Lenin thoroughly approved of it. "That shows at once the change, from our cessation to the defense of the fatherland, at 180 degrees. It is exactly what we need!" In one of the last points of the draft there was the question of the immediate execution of any one who gave assistance to the enemy. The Left Social Revolutionary Steinberg, whom a curious wind had driven into the revolution and even into the Council of People's Commissars, raised objections to this severe threat as it destroyed the "pathos of the appeal."

"On the contrary," exclaimed Lenin, "just there lies the real revolutionary pathós (he displaced the accent ironically). Do you think we can be victors without the most severe revolutionary terror?"

That was the period when Lenin, at every passing opportunity, emphasized the absolute necessity of the terror. All signs of sentimentality, laziness, or indifference—and all these were present even though in an attenuated form—did not enrage him in and for themselves, but as a sign that even the heads of the workmen's class did not



yet sufficiently estimate the unheard-of difficulties of the problems, which could only be solved by measures of equally unheard-of energy.

"They," said Lenin speaking of the enemy, "are faced by the danger of losing everything. And moreover they have hundreds of thousands of men who have gone through the school of war, sated, determined, officers ready for anything, ensigns, bourgeois, and heirs of land owners, police and well-to-do peasants. And there are, pardon the expression, 'revolutionaries' who imagine we should complete the revolution in love and kindness. Yes? Where did they go to school? What do they understand by dictatorship? What will become of a dictatorship if one is a weakling?"

We heard such tirades from him a dozen times a day and they were always aimed at some one among those present who was suspected of "pacifism." Lenin let no opportunity pass, when they spoke in his presence of the revolution and the dictatorship, particularly if this happened at the meetings of the Council of People's Commissars, or in the presence of the Left Social Revolutionaries or hesitating Communists, of remarking: "Where have we a dictatorship? Show it to me. It is confusion we have, but no dictatorship."

The word "confusion" he was very fond of.

"If we are not ready to shoot a saboteur and white guardist, what sort of big revolution is that? Just see how the bourgeois pack writes about us in the press! Where is there a dictatorship here? Nothing but talk and confusion. . . ." These speeches expressed his actual feeling, but at the same time they had a twofold end: according to his method Lenin hammered into the heads the consciousness that only unusually strong measures could save the revolution.

The weakness of the new state apparatus was most clearly manifest at the moment the Germans began the attack. "Yesterday we still sat firm in the saddle," said Lenin when alone with me, "and to-day we are only holding fast to the mane. But it is also a lesson. And this lesson cannot fail to have an effect upon our cursed negligence. To create order and really to attack the thing, is what we must do, if we do not wish to be enslaved! It will be a very good lesson if . . . if only the Germans, along with the Whites, do not succeed in overthrowing us."

"Well," Vladimir Ilyich once asked me quite unexpectedly, "if the White Guards kill you and me will Bucharin come to an understanding with Sverdlof?"

"Perhaps they will not kill us," I answered jokingly.

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"The devil knows," said Lenin and began to laugh himself. With that the conversation ended.

In one of the rooms at Smolny the staff held its sessions. It was the most confused of all the institutions. One never knew who made the arrangements, who commanded, and what was proper. Here was introduced for the first time the question of the military specialists in its general form. We had had some experience in this direction already in a struggle with Krasnov when we made Colonel Muravief commanding officer and he, on his side, appointed Colonel Walden to conduct the operations before Pulkov. Four sailors and a soldier were sent to Muravief with instructions to be on guard and not to take their hands from their revolvers. That was the origin of the system of the Commissars. To a certain extent this experience was also the basis of the formation of the Supreme War Council.

"Without severity to presuming and experienced military men we will not get out of this chaos," I said to Vladimir Ilyich every time I had been to the staff.

"That is evidently right; but they will certainly make use of treachery."

"We must appoint a commissar for each one."

"You had better give them two," Lenin ex-

claimed, "and strong ones. But it cannot be that we have no strong communists."

Thus began the formation of the Supreme War Council.

The question of the transfer of the government to Moscow caused no little friction. It seemed to be a desertion of Petrograd, which had laid the cornerstone of the October revolution. The workmen would not understand it. Smolny had become the symbol of the Soviet power and now they propose to liquidate it, etc.

Lenin was literally beside himself and replied to these objections: "Can you cover the question of the fate of the revolution with that kind of sentimental stupidity? If the Germans at a single bound take possession of Petersburg with us within it, the revolution is lost. If on the other hand the government is in Moscow, then the fall of Petersburg would only mean a serious part blow. How is it possible that you do not see and comprehend that? Besides if we stay in Petersburg under the present conditions we increase its military danger and at the same time rouse the Germans to occupation of Petersburg. If on the contrary the government is in Moscow the temptation to take Petersburg is incomparably less. Is it any great advantage to occupy a hungry revolutionary city if this occupation does not decide the fate of

the revolution and of peace? What is that stupid speech about the symbolic meaning of Smolny? Smolny is only Smolny because we are in it. And when we are in the Kremlin all their symbolism will be transferred to the Kremlin."

Finally the opposition was conquered. The government moved to Moscow. I remained in Petersburg for some time, I believe, as the president of the Petersburg revolutionary committee. On my arrival in Moscow I encountered Vladimir Ilyich in the Kremlin, in the so-called Cavaliers' wing. The "confusion," that is the disorder and chaos, were no less here than in Smolny. Vladimir Ilyich scolded good-naturedly about the Muscovites who fought for precedence, and he drew the reins tighter, step by step.

The government, which was renewed rather often in its separate parts, developed a feverish work in decrees. Every session of the Council of People's Commissars at first presented the picture of legislative improvisation on the greatest scale. Everything had to be begun at the beginning, had to be wrung from the ground. We could not offer "precedents," for history knew of none. Even simple requests were made difficult by the lack of time. The questions came up in progression of revolutionary inquisitiveness, that is, in incredible chaos. Big and little were

mingled most remarkably. Less important practical problems led to the most involved questions of principle. Not all, by no means all, the decrees were in harmony, and Lenin joked more than once, even openly, at the discords in our product of decrees. But in the end these contradictions, even if uncouth viewed from the practical tasks of the moment, were lost sight of in the work of revolutionary thinking, that, by means of legislation, pointed out new ways for a new world of human relations.

It remains to be said that the direction of this whole work was incumbent upon Lenin. He presided unweariedly, five or six hours at a time, at the Council of People's Commissars—and these meetings took place daily at the first period—passed from question to question, led the debates, allotted the speakers' time carefully by his watch, time that was later regulated by a presiding time-meter (or second-meter).

In general the questions came up without any preparation, and they never could be postponed, as has already been stated. Very often the nature of the question, before the beginning of the debate, was unknown to the members of the Council of People's Commissars as well as to the president. But the discussions were always concise, the introductory report was given five to ten minutes.



None the less the president towed the meeting into the right channel. If the meeting was well attended and if there were any specialists and particularly any unknown persons among the participants, then Vladimir Ilyich resorted to one of his favorite gestures: he put his right hand before his forehead as a shield and looked through his fingers at the reporters and particularly at the members of the assembly, by which means, contrary to the expression "to look through the fingers," he watched very sharply and attentively. On a narrow strip of paper was posted in tiny letters (economy!) the list of speakers. One eye watched the time that was posted above the table every now and then, to remind the speaker it was time to stop. At the same time the President quickly made a note of the conclusions that had seemed to him especially important in the course of the debate, in the form of resolutions. Generally, in addition to this, Lenin, to save time, sent the assembly members short memoranda in which he asked for some kind of information. These notes would represent a very voluminous and very interesting epistolary element in the technique of soviet legislation, but a large part of them has been destroyed as the answer was written on the reverse side of the note which the President then carefully destroyed. At a definite time Lenin read aloud the resolution

points, that were always intentionally stiff and pedagogic—in order to emphasize, to bring into prominence, to exclude any changes; then the debates were either at an end, or entered the concrete channel of practical motions and supplements. Lenin's "points" were thus the basis of the respective decree.

Among other necessary attributes this work required a strong creative imagination. This word may seem inadmissible at the first glance, but nevertheless it expresses exactly the essence of the thing. The human imagination may be of many kinds: the constructive engineer needs it as much as the unrestrained fiction writer. One of the most precious varieties of imagination consists in the ability to picture people, things, and phenomena as they are in reality, even when one has never seen them. The application and combination of the whole experience of life and theoretical equipment of a man with separate small stopping places caught in passing, their working up, fusion, and completion according to definite formulated laws of analogy, in order thereby to make clear a definite phase of human life in its whole concreteness—that is imagination, which is indispensable for a lawmaker, a government worker, and a leader in the time of revolution. The strength of Lenin

lay, to a very important degree, in the strength of his realistic imagination.

Lenin's definiteness of purpose was always concrete,—otherwise it would have belied its name. In the "Iskra," I believe, Lenin for the first time expressed the thought, that in the complicated chain of political action one must always seek out the central link for the moment in question in order to seize it and give direction to the whole chain. Later, too, Lenin returned to this thought quite often, even to the same picture of the chain and the ring. This method passed from the sphere of the conscious, as it were, into his unconsciousness and finally became second nature. In particularly critical moments, when it was a question of a very responsible or risky tactical change of position, Lenin put aside everything else less important that permitted postponement. This must by no means be understood in the sense that he had grasped the central problem in its main features only and ignored details. Quite the contrary. He had before his eyes the problem that he considered could not be postponed, in all its concreteness, took hold of it from all sides, studied the details, now and then even the secondary ones, and sought a point of attack in order to approach it anew and give force to it,—he recalled, expounded, emphasized, controlled, and urged. But

all was subordinated to the "link of the chain" which he regarded as decisive for the moment in question. He put aside, not only all that was at variance, directly or indirectly, with the central problem, but also that which might distract his attention and weaken his exertion. In particularly critical moments he was likewise deaf and blind to everything that had nothing to do with the question which held his entire interest. Merely the raising of other questions, neutral ones so to speak, he felt as a danger from which he instinctively retreated.

When one critical step had been successfully overcome, Lenin would often exclaim for some cause or another: "But we have quite forgotten to do so and so. . . . We have made a mistake while we were entirely occupied with the main problem. . . ." They often answered: "But this question came up and exactly this proposition was made, only you would not hear anything of it then."

"Yes, really?" he would reply. "I do not remember at all."

Then he laughed slyly and a little "consciously" and made a peculiar motion of the hand, characteristic of him, from above below, that seemed to mean: one cannot decide everything at the same time. This "defect" was only the reverse side of his faculty of the greatest inward mobilization of

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all his forces, and exactly this faculty made him the greatest revolutionary of history.

In Lenin's theses about peace written in January, 1918, he says: "For the success of socialism in Russia a certain period of time of *at least a few months is necessary.*"

Now these words seem quite incomprehensible. Is it not a mistake? Are not years or decades meant? But no, it is no mistake. One could probably find a number of other statements of Lenin of the same type. I remember very well that in the first period, at the sessions of the Council of People's Commissars at Smolny, Ilyich repeatedly said that within a half year socialism would rule and that we would be the greatest state in the world. The Left Social Revolutionaries, and not alone they, raised their heads in question and surprise, regarded each other, but were silent. This was his system of inculcation. Lenin wanted to train everybody, from now on, to consider all questions in the setting of their socialistic structure, not in the perspective of the "goal," but of today and tomorrow.

In this sharp change of position he seized the method so peculiar to him, of emphasizing the extreme: Yesterday we said socialism is the goal; but today it is a question of so thinking, speaking, and acting that the rule of socialism will be



guaranteed in a few months. Does that mean too that it should be only a pedagogical method? No, not that alone. To the pedagogic energy something must be added: Lenin's strong idealism, his intense will-power, that in the sudden changes of two epochs shortened the stopping places, and drew nearer to the definite ends. He *believed in what he said*. And this imaginative half-year respite for the development of socialism just as much represents a function of Lenin's spirit as his realistic taking hold of every task of today. The deep and firm conviction of the strong possibilities of human development, for which one can and must pay any price whatsoever in sacrifices and suffering, was always the mainspring of Lenin's mental structure.

Under the most difficult circumstances, in the most wearing daily work, in the midst of commissariat troubles and all others possible, surrounded by a bourgeois war, Lenin worked with the greatest care over the Soviet constitution, scrupulously harmonized minor practical requisites of the state apparatus with the problems of principle of a proletarian dictatorship in a land of peasants.

The Constitution Commission decided for some reason or other to remodel Lenin's "Declaration of the Rights of Producers" and bring it into



"accord" with the text of the constitution. When I came from the front to Moscow I received from the Commission, among other material, the outline of the transformed "declaration," or at least a part of it. I familiarized myself with it in Lenin's office, where only he and Sverdlof were present. They were doing the preparatory work for the Council of Soviets.

"But why is the declaration to be changed?" I asked Sverdlof, who was the head of the Constitution Commission.

Vladimir Ilyich raised his head with interest.

"Well, the Commission has just discovered that the 'declaration' contains discrepancies with the constitution and inexact formulations," Jakov Michailovich answered.

"In my opinion that is nonsense," I replied. "The declaration has already been accepted and has become an historical document—what sense is there in changing it?"

"That is quite right," Vladimir Ilyich interrupted. "I too think they have taken up this question quite unnecessarily. Let the youth live unshaven and disheveled: be he what he may, he is still a scion of the revolution . . . he will hardly be better if you send him to the barber."

Sverdlof tried "dutifully" to stand by the decision of his Commission, but he soon agreed

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with us. I realized that Vladimir Ilyich, who more than once had had to oppose propositions of the Constitution Commission, apparently did not wish to take up the struggle against a rearrangement of the "Declaration of the Rights of Producers," whose author he was. However, he was delighted by the support of a "third person" who unexpectedly turned up at the last moment. We three decided not to change the "declaration" and the worthy youth was spared the barber.

The study of the development of Soviet law-making in bringing into prominence its chief motives and turning points, in connection with the course of the revolution itself and the class relationships in it, presents a tremendously important task, because the results of it for the proletariat of other countries can be and must be of the greatest practical significance.

The collection of Soviet decrees forms, in a certain sense, a by no means unimportant part of the collected works of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin.

## THE CZECHO-SLOVAKS AND THE LEFT SOCIAL REVOLUTIONARIES

THE early part of 1918 weighed heavily upon us. There were moments when one had the feeling that everything was slipping and snapping, that there was nothing to hold fast to, nothing to support oneself on. On the one side, it was quite clear that without the October revolution the country would long ago have rotted. But on the other hand, in the spring of 1918 one asked the question unconsciously whether the life forces of the exhausted, shattered despairing land would last until the new régime was in the saddle. Provisions were not at hand. There was no army. The state apparatus was being put together. Conspiracies were festering everywhere. The Czecho-Slovak army stood on our soil as an independent power. We could offer almost no opposition to them.

Once Vladimir Ilyich said to me in a particularly difficult hour of 1918, "Today a delegation of workmen came to me.<sup>1</sup> And at my words one of them said, 'One sees that you too, Comrade

<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately I cannot remember why the delegation had come.

Lenin, take the side of the capitalists.' You know that was the first time I have heard such words. I confess that I was disconcerted and did not know what to answer. If that was no malicious type, no Menshevik, then it is a disquieting symptom."

When Lenin related this episode he seemed more troubled and alarmed than later when the dismal news came from the front of the fall of Kazan or the immediate threatening of Petersburg. And that too is comprehensible: Kazan and even Petersburg we can lose and win back. But the confidence of the workmen is the foundation capital of the party.

"I have the impression," I then said to Vladimir Ilyich, "that the country, after the fearfully severe illnesses that it has gone through, now needs better nourishment, rest, and care, to live on and recover; the slightest blow can overturn it now."

"I have the same impression," Vladimir Ilyich replied, "a terrible poverty of blood! Every further blow is dangerous now."

However, history threatened to let the Czecho-Slovaks strike this dangerous blow. The Czecho-Slovak corps penetrated, without opposition, into the disorderly body of southeastern Russia and united with the Social Revolutionaries and other heroes of still whiter colors. Even though the Bolsheviks were already in power everywhere,

still the structure was very loose in the country. That is not surprising. In reality the October revolution had only been carried through in Petrograd and Moscow. In the majority of the provincial cities the October, as well as the February, revolution, was accomplished by telegraph. They came and went because it had already happened thus in the capital. The lax social milieu, the lack of opposition on the part of yesterday's rulers, had, on the side of the revolution too, a less compact body as a result. The entry of the Czecho-Slovaks modified the situation, at first, against us, finally, however, in our favor. The Whites had gained a military crystallization point and in answer to that there first began an actual revolutionary crystallizing of the Reds. It can be said that the Volga district only completed its October revolution at the appearance of the Czecho-Slovaks. But it did not happen all at once. On July 3rd Vladimir Ilyich called me to the war commissariat.

"Do you know what has happened?" he asked in the muffled voice that in him indicated excitement.

"No, what is it?"

"The Left Social Democrats have thrown a bomb at Mirbach. It is reported he is badly

wounded. Come to the Kremlin, we must discuss it."

A few minutes later I was in Lenin's office. He told me the main circumstances and every moment asked by telephone for new details.

"Nice stories, indeed," I said, and digested the news which could not be called ordinary. "We cannot complain about a monotonous life."

"Ha," laughed Lenin troubled, "that is the customary monstrous excess of the bourgeois . . ."—he said *excess* ironically—"it is the position that Engels pictures as "the frenzied little bourgeois."

Again rapid telephone conversation, curt questions and answers from the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, from the All Russian Extraordinary Commission and other institutions. Lenin's mind worked as always in critical moments on two planes simultaneously. As a Marxist he enriched his historical experience, and appraised with interest this new manifestation, this "excess" of bourgeois radicalism, while at the same time as leader of the revolution, he unweariedly stretched the threads of information and controlled the practical steps. News came of a mutiny among the troops of the All Russian Extraordinary Commission.

"It seems as though the Left Social Revolu-



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tionaries would be the cherry stone that we are destined to stumble over. . . .”

“I have thought that very thing,” Lenin answered. “The fate of the wavering bourgeoisie lies in that very point; they come to the help of the White Guard like a cherry stone. . . . Now at any price we must influence the character of the German report to Berlin. The motive for military interference is quite sufficient, particularly when you take into consideration that Mirbach has continually reported that we are weak and a single blow would suffice. . . .” Soon after Sverdlof entered. He was the same as always.

“Now,” he said, as he greeted me laughingly, “now we must again change from a Council of People’s Commissars to a Revolutionary Committee.”

Lenin in the meantime received further information. I do not remember whether it was at this moment or later that the news came that Mirbach was dead. We had to go to the Embassy to express our “sympathy.” It was decided that Lenin, Sverdlof, and, I think, Tchitcherin should go. There was a question as to whether I should go too. After a hasty exchange of views I was absolved from this.

“What ought we to say there,” said Vladimir Ilyich shaking his head, “I have already talked

with Radek about it. I wanted to say '*Mitleid*,' but we must say '*Beileid*.' " <sup>1</sup>

He laughed a little, put on his coat and said firmly to Sverdlof: "Let us go." His face changed and became stone-gray. The drive to the Hohenzollern Embassy, to offer condolences over the death of Count Mirbach, was not an easy thing for Ilyich. As an inward experience it was probably one of the most difficult moments of his life.

In such days one learns to know men. Sverdlof was really incomparable—confident, courageous, firm, alert—the best type of Bolsheviki. In these difficult months Lenin learned to know and appreciate Sverdlof. Often Vladimir Ilyich summoned Sverdlof to suggest to him this or that speedy measure, and mostly received the answer: "Already!" That is to say, the measure had already been attended to. We often joked about it and said: "Sverdlof will probably again say 'already!'"

"And at first we were opposed to his entrance into the Central Committee," Lenin once said to me. "How falsely we can judge a man! There were regular disputes about it; but in the Congress we were corrected from below, and as it turned out with perfect right."

<sup>1</sup> "Mitleid" (sympathy) and "Beileid" (condolence) are German in the original.—*Translator.*

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The move on the part of the Left Social Revolutionaries deprived us of political comrades and allies, but in the end it did not weaken us but strengthened us. Our party united more firmly. In the institutions and the army the influence of the communistic groups increased. The policy of the government was surer.

The move of the Czecho-Slovaks undoubtedly contributed to this also, as it roused the party from the depressed mood it had been in since the peace of Brest-Litovsk. The period of party mobilization for the east front began. Vladimir Ilyich and I dismissed the first group to which the Left Social Revolutionaries still belonged. Here was already noticeable, even though it was somewhat indefinite, the organization of the future "political divisions." Meanwhile, the news from the Volga was more unfavorable. Muravief's treachery and the move of the Left Social Revolutionaries brought for the time new confusion at the east front. The danger suddenly became more acute. But now a radical change was brought about.

"We must mobilize everybody and everything and send them to the front," said Lenin. "We must take from behind the 'veil' all troops capable of fighting and throw them on the Volga."

I remember that the thin cordon of troops

## THE CZECHO-SLOVAKS

opposing the German occupation district in the west was called the "veil."

"And the Germans?" they said to Lenin.

"The Germans will not move, they have other things to do, and they are themselves interested that we should finish with the Czecho-Slovaks."

This plan was adopted and supplied the raw material for the future Fifth Army. Then my journey to the Volga was also decided upon. I busied myself in forming a train, which was no simple thing at that time. Vladimir Ilyich agreed to everything, wrote me short notes, and telephoned me unceasingly.

"Have you a strong automobile? Take one from the Kremlin garage."

And half an hour later: "Are you taking an aviator? You should do it in any case."

"There are aviators with the army," I replied. "In case of need I will use them."

And half an hour later: "But I mean that you should have an aviator with the train. You do not know what might happen." Etc., etc.

The motley pieced-together regiments and divisions consisted chiefly of disorganized soldiers of the old army, who scattered most lamentably at the first conflict with the Czecho-Slovaks.

"In order to overcome this dangerous lack of resistance we need absolutely strong shock di-

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visions of Communists and especially men fit for fighting," I said to Lenin before my departure for the east front. "We must *force* them to fight. If we wait until the peasant comes to his senses perhaps it will be too late."

"Naturally, that is right," he replied, "I am only afraid that even the shock divisions will not display the necessary firmness. The Russian man is tender-hearted, and the decided measures of the revolutionary terror do not interest him. But try we must."

The news of the attack on Lenin and the assassination of Urizky reached me at Swijaschsk. In these tragic days the revolution suffered an inward change. Its "good nature" gave way. The party steel received its last tempering. Firmness and, when necessary, ruthlessness grew out of it. At the front the political divisions struggled hand in hand with the shock troops and the tribunals to develop the power of the young army.

The change was evident at once. We took back Kazan and Simbirsk. In Kazan I received a despatch about the first victory at the Volga from Lenin who had recovered from the attack upon him.

When I reached Moscow soon after, I went with Sverdlof to Gorky to see Vladimir Ilyich, who recovered quickly, but had not yet returned to

Moscow to his work. We found him in excellent spirits. He asked at once about the organization of the army, its mood, the rôle of the communists, the increase of discipline and he repeated gayly, "Yes; that is good, that is excellent. The firmness of the army will prove effectual to the whole land at once by the increase of discipline and responsibility. . . ."

In the autumn the great revolution really occurred. Of the pallid weakness that the spring months had shown there was no longer a trace. Something had taken its place, had grown stronger, and it is remarkable that this time it was not a new pause for breath that had saved the revolution but, on the contrary, a new acute danger which had released the subterranean waves of revolutionary energy in the proletariat.

When Sverdlof and I entered the automobile, Lenin stood on the balcony calm and happy. I remember seeing him as calm as this only on the 25th of October, as he heard in Smolny of the first military results of the rising.

The Left Social Revolutionaries we had politically liquidated. The Volga was cleared. Lenin had recovered from his wounds; the revolution was strong in men.



## LENIN ON THE PLATFORM

**A**FTER the October revolution photographers and cinema-operators took Lenin more than once. His voice is recorded on phonograph discs. His speeches were reported and printed. Thus all the elements of Vladimir Ilyich are in existence. But only the elements. The living personality consists in their inimitable and steadily dynamic combination.

When I try mentally with fresh eye and fresh ear to see and hear Lenin on the platform, as I did the first time, I see a strong and supple figure of medium height, and hear a smooth, rapid, uninterrupted voice, rather striking, almost without pauses, and at first without special emphasis.

The first sentences are usually general, the tone is a test one, the whole figure has not yet found its balance, the gestures are incomplete. The gaze is turned inward; the face is sullen and even vexed. His mind is seeking an approach to the audience. This introductory period lasts a long or short time according to the audience, the theme, and the mood of the speaker. But all at once he reaches the kernel of the matter. The theme becomes

clear. The speaker bends the upper part of his body, and sticks his middle finger in the edge of his vest. As a result of this double movement his head and hands stand out. The head in itself does not seem large on the small but sturdy body, well formed and rhythmical. But his brow and the bare, arched forehead are powerful. His arms are very active but without exaggeration and nervousness. The hand is broad, short-fingered, "plebeian," strong. It has the same traits of confidence and virile good nature as the whole figure. One sees that best when the speaker is stirred on feeling an opponent's strategem, or has successfully set a trap for him. Then Lenin's eyes look forth from their deep-set sockets as they are represented significantly in an excellent photograph taken in 1919. Even the indifferent listener is startled when he catches this look and waits to see what will happen. The edges of his cheek bones glow and soften in these moments of intense mental concentration, back of which one detects keen knowledge of people, relations, and situations. The lower part of the face with its reddish gray beard is almost in shadow. The voice loses its hardness, becomes flexible and soft, and in many moments astutely insinuating.

But now the speaker introduces an adversary's possible objection or a malicious quotation from

an enemy's article. Before he states the hostile idea he makes it clear that the objection is unfounded, superficial, or false. He takes his fingers from his vest, throws his body back gently, and takes a few steps backward as though to clear a space for the attack, shrugs his sturdy shoulders half ironically, half in pretended despair, and stretches his hands with his fingers wide spread. Condemnation, ridicule, or confusion of his adversary, according to the adversary and the event—always precede his refutation. The listener knows in advance, as it were, what proofs to expect and what tone his mental attitude will assume. Then begins his logical attack. The left hand is either thrust into his vest anew, or more often in his trousers pocket; the right accompanies the logic of his thought and gives it its rhythm. Where it is necessary the left helps. The speaker leans toward his audience, goes to the edge of the platform, bends forward and elaborates with rounded motions his own word material. That means that he has reached the central thought, the main point of the whole speech.

If there are adversaries in the audience, critical or hostile cries arise from time to time. In nine out of ten cases they are unanswered. The speaker says what he considers necessary, he speaks to those for whom what is said is necessary, and says it as

he considers it necessary. He does not like to be interrupted by casual objections. Adroit readiness to fight does not suit his concentration. After hostile objections his voice becomes harder, his speech more compact and impressive, his train of thought sharper, his gestures harsher. He only notices a hostile call in case this responds to the general course of his thoughts and helps him to come to the necessary conclusion more quickly. But then his answers are apt to be quite unexpected in their deadly simplicity. He reveals the situation unmercifully exactly where they had expected that he would veil it. The Mensheviki had that experience more than once in the early periods of the revolution when the accusations of the harm to democracy had all their freshness.

"Our newspapers are shut down."

"Naturally! But unfortunately not yet all. Soon they will be shut down entirely." (Stormy applause.) The dictatorship of the proletariat will put a complete end to this disgraceful sale of bourgeois opium." (Stormy applause.)

The speaker draws himself up. Both hands are in his pockets. Here is not a trace of pose, the voice shows no rhetorical modulation, the whole figure, the position of his head with his lips pressed together, the cheek bones, and the slightly hoarse tone of his voice, express firm confidence in

his justice and truth. "If you wish to strike, well, we will take good care of it."

When the speaker attacks some one of his own people and not an enemy, one detects it in both his bearing and tone. Even the most violent attacks will in the main only bring one "to reason." Now and then the speaker's voice breaks on a high note; that happens when, in his zeal, he convinces one of his own people, disconcerts him, and proves that the opponent of this question had given it no thought and that the grounds for his objections were futile. While making these protestations his voice occasionally reaches the falsetto and breaks off, by which even the most angry tirade assumes a tinge of good nature.

The speaker has thought out his whole train of thought to the end, to the last practical result, but only the train, not the presentation and form, with the exception at the most of some particularly terse, pertinent, forcible expressions and catch phrases which then become the "loose change" of the political life of the party and the country. The phraseology is generally unpliant, one phrase above another or inverted and joined to another. Such a construction is a heavy affliction for stenographers, and later for the editors. But through these unpliant sentences the intense powerful thought forces its way.



But is the speaker really a Marxist of broad training, a theoretician of administration, and a man of enormous learning? Does it not seem, at least at some moments, as though an extraordinary auto-dictator were speaking, one who had reached all these results by his own thinking, who had first created it all in his own brain, in his own way, without scientific apparatus, without scientific terminology, and who now presents it in his way? What is the reason for this? Because the speaker has pondered over his thought not for himself alone, but also for the mass, has filtered his train of thought in their experience, in order to free his statement from all the theoretical tools he himself had used when he first took up the question.

Now and then, moreover, the speaker raises the ladder of his thoughts too hastily and jumps up two or three steps at once; this is the case if the conclusion seems to him very clear and practically close at hand, and he wants to bring his hearers to it as quickly as possible. But he detects at once that the audience is not with him, that the connection with his hearers is broken off. Then he constrains himself at once, springs down at one bound and begins the ascent anew, but with a calm and more moderate step. Even his voice is different, freed from all superfluous effort, therefore with the compelling force of conviction. The con-



struction of his speech naturally suffers from this backward leap. But is the speech made for its construction? Is any other logic of value in a speech but that which compels to action?

And when the speaker has reached his conclusion the second time and takes his hearers with him without exception, one detects in the hall the grateful pleasure that comes from the satisfied exertion of collective thinking. Now it only remains to nail the conclusion two or three times so that it holds well, and to give it a simple, clear, and picturesque expression so that it may more easily be impressed on the memory, and then one can give oneself and the others a breathing space, can joke and laugh, so that during this time the collective thinking can better absorb its new acquisition.

Lenin's oratorical humor was as simple as his other artifices, if one can speak of artifices at all here. There are no self-satisfied attempts to be witty, nor even puns, in Lenin's speeches. But energetic joking, intelligible to the masses, popular in the true sense of the word. If the political situation is not too alarming, if the majority of the listeners are "his own," then the speaker is not above making a joke. The audience accepts gratefully the crafty, naïve, witty remark, a good-natured, merciless characterization,

because it sees that here it is not merely a question of fine words but that there is something back of it, that all serves for one and the same goal.

When the speaker makes a joke, the lower part of his face projects more strongly, especially the mouth, which can laugh contagiously. The lines of his forehead and head grow softer, the eyes no longer glitter, but beam cheerfully, the strain of his bold mind is relieved by happiness and friendliness.

The leading feature in Lenin's speeches, as in his whole work, is his directness of purpose. He does not build up his speech but guides it to a definite, substantial conclusion. He approaches his listeners in different ways: he explains, convinces, disconcerts, jokes, convinces again, and explains again. What holds his speech together is not a formal plan, but a clear aim formed for today, that pierces the consciousness of his listeners like a splinter. His humor, too, is subordinated to that. His joking is utilitarian. A drastic catch phrase has its practical significance: some it incites, others it curbs. Hence come dozens of winged words, that have long been common property of the country.<sup>1</sup> However, before the speaker uses such a

<sup>1</sup> Trotzky introduces here a number of Lenin's word coinages that can scarcely be translated. Such as: "Peredychka," the pauses in breathing assigned as a cause in signing the peace of Brest; "Smytchka," the union of state and land; "Komschvantvo," the conceitedness of individual communists, etc.—*Translator*.

catch phrase, he describes some curves, in order to find just the right point. When he has found it, he applies his nail, measures it with his eye, strikes a mighty blow with his hammer on the head of the nail, once, twice, ten times, until the nail is firm, so that it would be very hard to draw it out if it were no longer needed. Then Lenin again strikes the nail with a witty remark from left and right to loosen it, until he has drawn it out and thrown it in the old iron of the archives—to the great sorrow of all who had become accustomed to the nail.

And now the speech approaches its end. The separate points are established, the conclusions firmly drawn. The speaker looks like an exhausted workman who has finished his work. From time to time he passes his hand over his bald head with its drops of perspiration. His voice has sunk as a camp fire dies away. He is about to close. But one looks in vain for an ascending finale to crown the speech and without which ostensibly one cannot leave the platform. Others cannot, but Lenin can. There is no rhetorical winding up with him: he finishes the work and makes a point. "If we understand this, if we act thus, then we shall surely conquer" is a not unusual concluding sentence. Or: "One must strive for that, not in words, but in deeds." Or now and then more simple: "That

is all that I wanted to say to you," nothing more. And this conclusion, which entirely corresponds to the nature of Lenin's eloquence and the nature of Lenin himself, by no means cools his audience. On the contrary, after just such a conclusion, "without effect," "pale," the listeners grasp once more, as if with a single blaze of consciousness, all that Lenin had given them in his speech, and the audience breaks out into stormy, grateful, enthusiastic applause.

But Lenin has already gathered up his papers and quickly leaves the speaker's desk in order to escape the inevitable. His head drawn to his shoulders, his chin down, his eyes concealed by his brows, his mustache bristles angrily on the upper lip puckered in annoyance. The roaring hand-clapping grows, and hurls wave upon wave . . . "Long live . . . Lenin . . . Leader . . . Ilyich . . ." There in the glare of the electric lights the unique head stands out, surrounded on all sides by enormous waves of enthusiasm. And when it seems that the storm has reached its height, all at once, through the confusion, tumult and clapping, like a siren in a storm, a youthful voice, strained and enthusiastic, calls out: "Long live Ilyich!" And from the inmost quivering depths of solidarity, love and enthusiasm, rises the general cry, making the arches ring, "Long live Lenin!"

## THE PHILISTINE AND THE REVOLUTIONARY

**I**N one of the many books devoted to Lenin, I came upon an article by the English author Wells under the title of "The Visionary of the Kremlin." There is an editorial note that explains: "Even such progressive men as Wells had not understood the proletarian revolution going on in Russia." One would think this was not a sufficient reason to put Wells's article in a book devoted to the leader of this revolution. But it is not worth while criticizing; I personally at least have read some pages of Wells not without interest, for which to be sure the author, as is evident from what follows, is quite innocent.

I have vividly before my eyes the time that Wells visited Moscow. It was the hungry and cold winter of 1920-21. There was a restless foreboding in the air of the difficulties that the spring was to bring. Starving Moscow lay buried deep in snow. Our policy was on the eve of a sharp change. I remember very well the impression Vladimir Ilyich carried away from his conversation with Wells.



"What a bourgeois he is! He is a Philistine!" he repeated, and raised both hands above the table, laughed and sighed, as was characteristic of him when he felt a kind of inner shame for another man.

"Ah, what a Philistine," he began the conversation anew. Our conversation took place before the opening of the session of the Political Bureau and was limited essentially to this repeated short characterization of Wells. But that was quite enough. I confess that I have read little of Wells, and have never seen him. But the English drawing-room Socialist, Fabian, belles-lettrist on visionary and Utopian themes, who traveled here to see for himself the communistic experiments,—this picture I could form with sufficient clearness. And Lenin's exclamation, especially his tone, supplied me with the rest.

Wells's article, that in some inaccountable way got into this book of Lenin, has not only brought back to my memory Lenin's exclamation, but has filled it with vivid meaning. For if there is hardly a trace of Lenin in Wells's article, Wells himself, just as he is, is contained in it.

Let us begin with the complaint with which Wells introduces himself; he had to, just think of it, run about a long time to get an interview with Lenin, which "provoked" him (Wells) extremely.



Had Lenin sent for Wells? Had he bound himself to receive him? Did Lenin have any superabundance of time? On the contrary, in those very difficult days every moment of his time was occupied; it would not have been easy to find a free hour to receive Wells. Even a foreigner should have had no difficulty in understanding that. But the whole trouble was that Wells, as a cultivated foreigner and—for all his "Socialism"—a stock conservative Englishman of imperialistic mold, was completely obsessed with the conviction that he was conferring great honor upon this barbaric land and its ruler by his visit. Wells's article from the first to the last lines exhales this unjustifiable self-sufficiency.

The characterization of Lenin begins, as one might expect, with revelation. Lenin, think of it, is "by no means a man of letters." Who in fact could decide this question if not the professional man of letters, Wells? "Short, uncouth pamphlets that appear in Moscow with his (Lenin's) signature, full of false ideas about the psychology of the workmen of the west . . . give little expression to the actual character of Lenin's mind." The honorable gentleman naturally does not know that Lenin has written a number of great and fundamental books on the agrarian question, on theoretic economics, sociology, and philosophy. Wells

knows only "short, uncouth pamphlets" and even here he remarks that "they only appear with Lenin's signature," that is, he implies that others have written them. The actual "character of Lenin's mind" reveals itself then, not in the dozens of volumes he has written, but in that one hour's conversation into which the extremely enlightened visitor from Great Britain deigned to enter.

From Wells one might at least expect an interesting description of the outward impression of Lenin, and for the sake of a single well-observed small trait we were ready to pardon him for all his Fabian absurdities. But there is nothing of that to be found in the article. "Lenin has an agreeable brunette countenance whose expression changes constantly and a lively smile. . . . Lenin is not much like his photographs." "During our conversation he gesticulated a little." In these banalities Wells does not differ from the assistant reporter of a capitalistic newspaper. Moreover, he discovers that Lenin's forehead reminds him of Arthur Balfour's long, rather unsymmetrical head and, on the whole, Lenin is a "little man"; "when he sits on the edge of his chair, his feet scarcely touch the ground."

As far as Arthur Balfour's head is concerned, we have nothing to say about this worthy object and are glad to believe it is long. But in all the

rest, what shocking inaccuracy! Lenin was reddish blond; in no case can he be described as brunette. He was of medium height, perhaps a little less; but that he gave the impression of a "little man" and hardly touched the floor with his feet, that could only be the opinion of Wells, who had come with the consciousness of a civilized Gulliver into the land of the northern Communistic Lilliputians.

In addition, Wells remarks that in the pauses of conversation Lenin had the habit of covering his eyes with his hand. "Perhaps that is due to some defect of sight," says the ingenious man of letters. We know these gestures. They were in evidence when Lenin had with him a new man who was unknown to him; with his hand on his forehead like a shield, he looked through his fingers hastily at the visitor. The "defect" of Lenin's sight was that he looked through his interviewer that way, saw his pompous self-satisfaction, his narrowness, his civilized haughtiness and his civilized ignorance, and when he had taken in this picture, shook his head a long time and said: "What a Philistine! What a monstrous little bourgeois!"

Comrade Rothstein was present at this conference and Wells made the discovery in passing that his presence is "characteristic of the present state

of affairs in Russia." Rothstein, by order of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, controlled Lenin on account of his extreme frankness and his fantastic imprudence. What can one say to this priceless observation? When Wells entered the Kremlin he brought with him in his consciousness the whole fog of international bourgeois information and discovered with his keen eye—that naturally had no "defect"—in Lenin's office what he had fished out of the "Times" beforehand or from some other reservoir of respectable and ironed-out gossip.

But what did the conversation really consist of? In regard to this we learn from Wells quite hopeless commonplaces that prove how poorly and wretchedly Lenin's thoughts are reflected in another mind whose symmetry in other respects we have no cause to doubt.

Wells had come in the belief that "he would have to dispute with a convinced Marxist doctrinaire, but nothing of the kind was the case." That does not surprise us. We already know that the "reality" of Lenin's mind did not reveal itself in his political and literary activity of more than thirty years, but in his conversation with the English Philistine.

"I have been told," Wells goes on, "that Lenin loves to advise, but he has not done that with me."

How can one in fact advise a gentleman who is sustained by such self-consciousness? That Lenin loved to advise is, besides, not true. It is true that Lenin understood how to speak very instructively. But he only did it when he was of the opinion that his fellow conversationalist was ready to learn something. In such cases he spared neither time nor trouble. But in the presence of the magnificent Gulliver whom the favor of fate had brought to the office of the "little man," Lenin must have come to a firm conviction, after two or three minutes, somewhat like the inscription over the entrance into Dante's hell: "All hope abandon!"

The conversation touched upon large cities. Wells had decided the first time he was in Russia—as he declared—that the exterior of a city is determined by the trade in its shops and markets. He shared this discovery with his fellow conversationalist. Lenin "added" that a city under communism would grow considerably smaller in extent; Wells "pointed out" to Lenin that the renovation of the cities would be a gigantic task and that many of the enormous buildings of Petersburg would only retain their significance as historic monuments. Lenin also agreed with this incomparable commonplace of Wells. "I had the impression," the latter added, "that it was agreeable to him to talk with a man who understood the



inevitable consequences of collectivism which had escaped the understanding of many of his own young men." There is the best gauge for Wells's *niveau*. He considers the discovery, that under communism the present huge concentrated cities will disappear and many of the present capitalistic architectural monsters will retain their significance only as historic monuments (so far as they are spared the honor of destruction), a fruit of his extraordinary penetration. How could the poor communist ("the wearisome fanatics of the class struggle," as Wells describes them) make such discoveries, which besides are already described in a popular commentary on the old program of German Social Democracy, without mentioning that the classical Utopians knew this already?

I hope that now it will be understood why Wells "did not notice particularly," in the course of his conversation, that laugh of Lenin of which he had heard so much. Lenin was not in a mood to laugh. I am even afraid that his jaw expressed something quite different from laughter. But his flexible and clever hand did him the necessary service, which it always understood opportunely, of concealing from his interviewer, so occupied with himself, the irritation of an impolite yawn. As we have already heard, Lenin did not advise Wells, and for reasons



that we fully understand. Therefore Wells advised Lenin the more forcibly. He brought to him the quite new thought that for the success of socialism it is "necessary to reorganize not only the material side of life but also the psychology of the whole people." He pointed out to Lenin that "the Russians are by nature individualists and traders." He declared to him that communism was acting "too hastily" and was destroying before it could build up, etc., always in the same sense.

"That brought us to the main point," Wells says, "where our views diverged, to the difference between evolutionary collectivism and Marxism." Under evolutionary collectivism we have the Fabian brew of liberalism, philanthropy, social legislation, and Sunday lectures about a better future. Wells himself formulates the nature of his evolutionary collectivism as follows: "I believe that by a definite system of education for all society the existing capitalistic system can be civilized and transformed into a collective one." Wells does not explain, however, who is actually to carry out "the definite system of education" and on whom it is to be carried out: The Lords with the high foreheads on the English proletariat, or the other way round, the English proletariat on the heads of the Lords? Oh, no, everything except

that. For what purpose are the enlightened Fabians there, the people of intelligence, of unselfish imagination, the gentlemen and ladies, Mr. Wells and Mrs. Snowden, if they do not civilize capitalistic society by a definite and tedious use of what lies hidden in their own craniums and transform it into a collective one by so reasonable and happy a gradation that even the royal dynasty of Great Britain notices nothing whatever?

All this Wells laid down, and all this Lenin listened to. "For me," Wells remarked graciously, "it was really a recreation (!) to talk with this unusual little man."

And for Lenin?—Oh, long suffering Ilyich! He probably permitted several very expressive and strong Russian words to pass through his mind. He did not translate them aloud in English and apparently not only because his English vocabulary would not have reached nearly so far but also for reasons of politeness. Ilyich was very polite. But finally he could no longer confine himself to this polite silence. "He was compelled," Wells reported, "to answer me and declared that capitalism of today is incurably greedy and destructive, and that it cannot be taught." Lenin referred to a number of facts contained in the new book of Monais: that capitalism had destroyed the English national docks, had prevented a suitable profit

of the coal mines, etc. Ilyich knew the language of facts and figures.

"I confess," Wells concludes unexpectedly, "it was very difficult for me to debate with him." What does that mean? Can this be the beginning of a capitulation of evolutionary collectivism to the logic of Marxism? No, no, "all hope abandon." This statement, at first unexpected, is by no means accidental, but belongs to the system and consequently bears a Fabian evolutionary pedagogic character. It is intended for the English capitalists, bankers, Lords, and their ministers. Wells says to them: Look, your conduct is so bad, so destructive and selfish, that in a discussion with the visionary of the Kremlin it was very difficult for me to justify the principles of my evolutionary collectivism. Think it over, complete each day the Fabian washings, become civilized, take the road of progress. Thus Wells's troubled admission is not the beginning of self-criticism but only the continuation of that educative work of capitalistic society that has come out of the imperialistic war and the Versailles Peace so perfected, so moralized, and so fabianized.

With condescending sympathy Wells remarks, "Lenin's faith in his cause is boundless." There is nothing to be said against that. Lack of faith in his cause was not to be found in Lenin. What is

right must remain right. This faith gave him, among other things, the patience, in those desperate months of blockade, to converse with every foreigner who even indirectly was able to connect Russia and the west. That was Lenin's conversation with Wells. On the other hand, he talked quite, quite differently with the English workmen who came to him. With them he had active relations. Here he taught and learned. The interview with Wells, on the contrary, bore a half constrained and diplomatic character. "Our conversation ended undecidedly," the author says. In other words: the game between evolutionary collectivism and Marxism ended this time in a draw. Wells went back to Great Britain, and Lenin remained in the Kremlin. Wells wrote a foolish series of articles for the bourgeois public, while Lenin, shaking his head, repeated, "That is a little bourgeois! Aye, aye, what a Philistine!"

You may perhaps ask why now, after almost four years, I dwell on so insignificant an article of Wells. The fact that it met with a good reception in one of the books devoted to Lenin's death is not enough. It is also not enough justification that I wrote these lines in Suchum during my convalescence. No, I have more important reasons. At the present moment Wells's party holds the

power in England with the enlightened representatives of evolutionary collectivism at the head. And I find—I believe not entirely without reason—that Wells's lines devoted to Lenin will reveal to us, perhaps better than many other things, the soul of the leading class of the English Labor Party; in the long run Wells is not the worst among them. How terribly these men have been outdistanced under their heavy burden of bourgeois prejudices! Their arrogance, the late-reflex of the great historical rôle of the English bourgeoisie, does not permit them to put themselves into the life of other peoples—in new ideas, in the historical process that goes on above their heads. As narrow routinists and empiricists along with bourgeois public opinion these gentlemen spread themselves and their prejudices over the entire world and end by noticing nothing but themselves.

Lenin had lived in all countries of Europe, he mastered foreign languages, he read, studied, went into them deeply; he compared and generalized. Even when he stood at the head of a great revolutionary country he let no opportunity pass to take advice scrupulously and attentively, to collect information and experience. He never wearied of following the life of the entire world. He spoke freely and read German, French, and English, and read Italian. In the last years of his



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life, overwhelmed with work, at the sessions of the Political Bureau he quietly studied Czech grammar, in order to get a direct feeling for the workmen's movement in Czecho-Slovakia; we "caught" him at it now and then. He laughed in some embarrassment and apologized. In comparison with him Wells embodies that race of ostensibly educated, narrow bourgeois, who look but see nothing, and believe they have nothing more to learn, as they are sufficiently provided with their inherited prejudices. And Mr. Macdonald, who is a more settled and gloomy puritanical variety of the same type, calms bourgeois public opinion thus: We have fought with Moscow and conquered Moscow.

Conquered Moscow? Yes, *they* are in reality poor "little men," even though they have grown large. They do not know today, after all that has passed, anything about their own tomorrow. The Liberal and Conservative leaders make short work of the "revolutionary" socialistic pedants who are in power; they compromise them and knowingly prepare their fall, their fall not only as ministers, but their political fall. At the same time they prepare—though it is less a matter of common knowledge—the seizure of power by the English Marxists. Yes, indeed, the Marxists, "the wearisome fanatics of the class struggle."



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For the English social revolution, too, follows the laws that Marx has laid down.

With the wit peculiar to him—heavy as a pudding—Wells once threatened to take a scissors and trim Marx's "doctrinaire" mane and beard, to anglicize, to respectabilize and fabianize him. But nothing has come of this project. And nothing will come of it. Marx will remain Marx, as Lenin has remained Lenin, after Wells had painfully shaved him for a whole hour with a dull knife. And we have the boldness to prophesy that in a not too distant future in London, for example in Trafalgar Square, two bronze figures will be erected side by side: Karl Marx and Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. The English proletarians will say to their children: "What a good thing it was that the little men of the 'Labor Party' did not cut the hair and beard of these two giants."

In expectation of this day, which I strive to live to see, I close my eyes a moment and clearly see Lenin's form on the same chair that Wells had seen him and hear, the day after this meeting—perhaps it was the very day—his words accompanied by a sigh from his heart: "He is a little bourgeois! He is a Philistine!"

April 6, 1924.

# Lenin The Man



## NATIONALISM IN LENIN<sup>1</sup>

**L**ENIN'S internationalism needs no recommendation. Its distinguishing mark is the irreconcilable break, in the first days of the world war, with that falsification of internationalism that prevailed in the Second International. The official leaders of "Socialism," from the parliamentary tribune, by abstract arguments in the spirit of the old Cosmopolites, brought the interests of the fatherland into harmony with the interests of humanity. In practice this led, as we know, to the support of the rapacious fatherland through the proletariat.

Lenin's internationalism is by no means a form of reconciliation of Nationalism and Internationalism in words but a form of international revolutionary action. The territory of the earth inhabited by so-called civilized man is looked upon as a coherent field of combat on which the separate peoples and classes wage gigantic warfare against each other. No single question of importance can be forced into a national frame. Visible and invisible threads connect this question with dozens

<sup>1</sup> *Pravda*, No. 86, April 23rd, 1920.

of phenomena at all ends of the world. In his appreciation of international factors and powers Lenin is freer than most people from national prejudices.

Marx was of the opinion that the philosophers had declared the world satisfactory and believed it to be his task to transform it. But he, the prophet of genius, had not lived to see it. The transformation of the old world is now in full swing and Lenin is its first worker. His internationalism is a practical appreciation of historical events and a practical adaptation to their course on an international scale and for international aims. Russia and her fate are only one element in this great historical struggle upon whose outcome the fate of humanity depends.

Lenin's internationalism needs no recommendation. Withal Lenin himself is national to a high degree. He is deeply rooted in the new Russian history, makes it his own, gives it its most pregnant expression, and thereby reaches the height of international action and international influence.

At first the characterization of Lenin as "national" may seem surprising, and yet it is, fundamentally considered, a matter of course. To be able to direct such a revolution, without precedent in the history of peoples, as is now taking place in Russia, it is most evidently necessary to have

## NATIONALISM IN LENIN

an indissoluble organic connection with the main strength of popular life, a connection which springs from the deepest roots.

Lenin embodies in himself the Russian proletariat, a youthful class, that politically is scarcely older than Lenin himself, withal a deeply national class, for the whole past development of Russia is bound up with it, in it lies Russia's entire future, with it lives and dies the Russian nation. Lack of routine and example, of falseness and convention, moreover, firmness of thought and boldness of action, a boldness that never degenerates into want of understanding, characterize the Russian proletariat and also Lenin.

The nature of the Russian proletariat, that has actually made it the most important power in the international revolution, had been prepared beforehand by the course of Russian national history, by the barbaric cruelty of the most absolute of states, the insignificance of the privileged classes, the feverish development of capitalism in the dregs of exchange, the deterioration of the Russian bourgeoisie and their ideology, the degeneration of their politics. Our "Third Estate" knew neither a reformation nor a great revolution and could not know them. So the revolutionary problems of the proletariat assumed a more comprehensive character. Our historical past knows



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neither a Luther, nor a Thomas Munzer, neither a Mirabeau nor a Danton, nor a Robespierre. For that very reason the Russian proletariat has its Lenin. What was lacking in tradition was gained in revolutionary energy.

Lenin reflects in himself the Russian workman's class, not only in its political present but also in its rustic past which is so recent. This man, who is indisputably the leader of the proletariat, not only outwardly resembles a peasant, but has also something about him which is strongly suggestive of a peasant. Facing Smolny stands the statue of the other hero of the proletariat of the world: Marx on a pedestal in a black frock coat. To be sure, this is a trifle, but it is quite impossible to imagine Lenin in a black frock coat. In some pictures Marx is represented in a broad shirt front on which a monocle dangles.

That Marx was not inclined to coquetry is clear to all who have an idea of the Marxian spirit. But Marx grew up on a different basis of national culture, lived in a different atmosphere, as did also the leading personalities of the German workman's class, with their roots reaching back, not to the village, but to the corporation guilds and the complicated city culture of the middle ages.

Marx's style also, which is rich and beautiful, in which strength and flexibility, anger and irony,

harshness and elegance are combined, betrays the literary and ethical strata of all the past German socialistic literature since the reformation and even before. Lenin's literary and oratorical style is extremely simple, ascetic, as is his whole nature. But this strong asceticism has not a shade of moral preaching about it. This is not a principle, no thought-out system and assuredly no affectation, but is simply the outward expression of inward concentration of strength for action. It is an economic peasant-like reality on a very large scale.

The entire Marx is contained in the "Communist Manifest," in the foreword to his "Critique," in "Capital." Even if he had not been the founder of the First International he would always remain what he is. Lenin, on the other hand, expands at once into revolutionary action. His works as a scholar mean only a preparation for action. If he had never published a single book in the past he would still appear in history what he now is: the leader of the proletarian revolution, the founder of the Third International.

A clear, scholarly system—materialistic dialectics—was necessary, to be able to renounce deeds of this kind that devolved upon Lenin; it was necessary but not sufficient. Here was needed that mysterious creative power that we call intuition: the ability to grasp appearances correctly at once,

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to distinguish the essential and important from the unessential and insignificant, to imagine the missing parts of a picture, to weigh well the thoughts of others and above all of the enemy, to put all this into a united whole and the moment the "formula" for it comes to his mind, to deal the blow. This is intuition to action. On the one side it corresponds with what we call penetration.

When Lenin, his left eye closed, receives by radio the parliamentary speech of a leader of imperialistic history or the expected diplomatic note, a web of bloodthirsty reserve and political cant, he resembles a damnably proud moujik who won't be imposed upon. This is the high-powered peasant cunning, which amounts almost to genius, equipped with the latest acquisitions of a scholarly mind.

The young Russian proletariat is able to accomplish what only he accomplishes who has plowed up the heavy sod of the peasantry to its depths. Our whole national past has prepared this fact. But just because the proletariat came into power through the course of events has our revolution suddenly and radically been able to overcome the national narrowness and provincial backwardness; Soviet Russia became not only the place of refuge of the Communistic International, but also the living embodiment of its program and methods.

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By unknown paths, not yet explored by science, on which the personality of man acquires its form, Lenin has taken from nationalism all that he needed for the greatest revolutionary action in the history of humanity. Just because the social revolution, that has long had its international theoretical expression, found for the first time in Lenin its national embodiment, he became, in the true sense of the word, the revolutionary leader of the proletariat of the world.

## LENIN WOUNDED<sup>1</sup>

**C**OMRADES, the brotherly greeting I hear I explain by the fact that in these difficult days and hours we all feel as brothers the need of closer union with each other and with our Soviet organization, and the need of standing united under our communistic flag. In these anxious days and hours when our standard-bearer, and with perfect right it can be said, the international standard-bearer of the proletariat, lies on his sick bed fighting with the terrible specter of death, we are closer to each other than in the hours of victory. . . .

The news of the attack on Lenin reached me and many other comrades in Svijashk on the Kasan front. There blows were falling fast, blows from the right, blows from the left, blows on the head. But this new blow was a blow in the back from ambush. Treacherously it has opened a new front, which for the present moment is the most distressing, the most alarming for us: the front where Vladimir Ilyich's life struggles with death. Whatever defeats may be expected by us on this or that

<sup>1</sup> Speech made at a session of the All Russian Central Executive Committee on September 2nd, 1918.

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front—I am like you firmly convinced of our imminent victory—the defeat of no single part could be so difficult, so tragic, for the workmen's class of Russia and the whole world, as would be a fatal issue of the fight at the front that runs through the breast of our leader.

One need only reflect in order to understand the concentrated hate that this figure has called forth and will call forth from all the enemies of the workmen's class. For nature produced a masterpiece when she created in a single figure an embodiment of the revolutionary thinking and the unbending energy of the workmen's class. This figure is Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. The gallery of leaders of the workmen—of revolutionary fighters—is very rich and varied, and like many other comrades who have been for three decades in revolutionary work, I have met in different lands many varieties of the type of leaders of workmen, of revolutionary representatives of the workmen's class. But in the person of Comrade Lenin we have a figure created for our epoch of blood and iron.

Behind us lies the epoch of so-called peaceful development of bourgeois society, where contradictions gradually accumulated, where Europe lived through the period of so-called armed peace, and blood flowed almost in the colonies alone,



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where rapacious capital tore to pieces the more backward peoples. Europe enjoyed the so-called peace of capitalistic militarism. In this epoch were formed and fashioned the most noted leaders of the European workmen movement. Among them we see the brilliant figure of August Bebel, the great dead. He reflected the epoch of the gradual and slow development of the workmen's class. Along with courage and iron energy, the most extreme caution in all movements, an actual testing of the ground, the strategy of waiting and of preparation were peculiar to him. He reflected the process of the gradual molecular accumulation of the powers of the workmen's class—his thought went forward step by step, just as the German workmen's class in the time of international reaction rose slowly from below and freed itself from darkness and prejudices. His mental figure grew, developed, became stronger and greater, but all that on the basis of waiting and preparation. Thus August Bebel in his thoughts and methods was the best figure of an earlier epoch that already belongs to the past.

Our epoch is woven of another material. This epoch where the old accumulated contradictions burst out in a terrible explosion, where they tore asunder the veil of bourgeois society, where all the foundations of international capitalism were

shattered to the ground by the terrible murdering of the people, the epoch which revealed all the class oppositions and placed before the people the horrible reality of the destruction of millions in the name of bare profit interests. And for this epoch the history of western Europe has forgotten, neglected, or failed to bring about the creation of *the* leader—and that not in vain: for all the leaders who on the eve of the war enjoyed the greatest confidence of the European workmen reflected yesterday but not today. . . .

As the new epoch began, the epoch of terrible convulsions and bloody battles, it went beyond the strength of the earlier leaders. It pleased history—and that is no chance—to create a figure at a single casting in Russia, a figure that reflects in itself our entire terrible and great epoch. I repeat that this is no chance. 1847 produced in backward Germany the figure of Marx, the greatest of all fighters in the realm of thought, who pointed out the ways to new history. Germany was then a backward land, but history willed it that Germany's intelligentsia should go through revolutionary development and that their most important representative, who commanded their entire knowledge, should break with the bourgeois society, place himself on the side of the revolutionary proletariat, and work out the program of

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the workmen's movement as the theory of development of the workmen's class.

What Marx prophesied in that epoch, our epoch is called upon to carry out. But she needs new leaders, who must be the bearers of the great spirit of our epoch in which the workmen's class has lifted itself to the heights of its historic task and sees clearly the frontier that it must pass if mankind is to live and not fall like carrion on the broad highway of history. For this epoch Russian history created a new leader. Everything that was good in the old revolutionary intelligentsia, their spirit of self-denial, of courage and hatred of oppression, all this was concentrated in this figure, which, however, in its youth had broken irrevocably with the world of the intelligentsia on account of their connections with the bourgeoisie, and embodied in itself the thought and reality of the development of the workmen's class. Relying on the young revolutionary proletariat of Russia, this figure made use of the rich experience of the international movement of workmen, transformed its ideology into a lever for action and then rose on the political horizon in its entire greatness. It is the figure of Lenin, the greatest man of our revolutionary epoch.

I know, and you know too, comrades, that the fate of the workmen does not depend on single per-

sonalities; that does not mean that personality in the history of our movement and of the development of the workmen's class is of minor importance. One person cannot mold the workmen's class anew after its own pattern and image and point out to the proletariat consciously this or that path of development, but he can help the fulfillment of the workmen's tasks and lead them more quickly to their goal. The critics have pointed out that Karl Marx prophesied the revolution would be much nearer than was actually the case. They answered the critics with perfect right that as Marx stood on a high mountain, the distance seemed shorter.

Many have criticized Vladimir Ilyich, too, more than once—and I among them—because he did not notice many less conspicuous causes and accidental circumstances. I must say that this might have been a defect for a political leader in a time of "normal" slow development; but this was the greatest merit of Comrade Lenin as leader of the new epoch. All that is incidental, external, of secondary importance is omitted, and only the basic, irreconcilable antagonism of the classes remains in the fearful form of the bourgeois war. To cast his revolutionary look into the future, to grasp the essential, the fundamental, the important—that was the gift peculiar to Lenin in the

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highest degree. Any one to whom it was granted, as it was to me in this period, to observe Vladimir Ilyich's work at close range could not fail to look with enthusiasm—I repeat the word enthusiasm—at this gift of the keen, penetrating mind that rejected all the external, the accidental, the superficial, in order to perceive the main roads and methods of action. The workmen learn to appreciate those leaders who point out the path of progress and follow it without hesitating, even when the prejudices of the proletariat itself temporarily hinder them. With this gift of a powerful mind Vladimir Ilyich also was endowed with an inflexible will. The combination of these characteristics produces the real revolutionary leader, who is molded out of bold, pitiless mind and hard, unyielding will.

What good fortune it is that all that we say, hear, and read in resolutions about Lenin is not in an obituary form. And yet we were near that. . . . We are convinced that on this near front, here in the Kremlin, life will conquer and Vladimir Ilyich will soon return to our ranks.

When I have said, comrades, that in his courageous mind and his revolutionary will he embodies the workmen's class, one may say that it is an inner symbol, almost a conscious purpose of history, that our leader in these heavy hours when



the Russian working class fights on the outer front with all its strength, against the Czecho-Slovaks, the white guards, the mercenaries of England and France—that our leader fights with the wounds inflicted on him by the agents of these very white guards, Czecho-Slovaks, the mercenaries of England and France. Here lies an inner connection and a deep historical symbol. And particularly so as we are all convinced that in our struggle with the Czecho-Slovak, Anglo-French and white guard front we grow stronger every day and every hour—I can state that as an eye-witness who has just returned from the seat of war—yes, we grow stronger every day, we shall be stronger to-morrow than we are today, and stronger the day after than we shall be tomorrow; for me there is no doubt that the day is not distant when I can say to you that Kasan, Simbirsk, Samara, Ufa, and the other temporarily occupied cities are returning to our Soviet family—in the same way we hope that the process of recovery of Comrade Lenin will go on in rapid measure.

But even now his image, the inspiring image of the wounded leader, who has left the front for a time, stands clearly before us. We know that not for a moment has he left our ranks, for, even when laid low by the treacherous bullet, he rouses us all, summons us, and drives us onward. I have



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not seen a single comrade, not a single honest workman, who let his hands drop under the influence of the news of the traitorous attack on Lenin, but I have seen dozens who clenched their fists, whose hands sought their guns; I have seen hundreds and thousands of lips that vowed merciless revenge on the enemies of the proletariat. I do not need to state how the class-conscious fighters at the front reacted, when they learned that Lenin was lying there with two bullets in his body. No one can say of Lenin that his character lacks metal; but now the metal is no longer in his spirit only, but also in his body. Thereby he is even dearer to Russia's working class.

I do not know if our words and heart-beats reach Lenin's sickbed, but I have no doubt that he feels it all. I have no doubt that he knows even in his fever how our hearts beat in double, three-fold measure. We all recognize now more clearly than ever that we are members of one and the same communistic Soviet family. Never did the life of each of us stand so much in the second or third line as at the moment when the life of the greatest man of our time is in danger of death. Any fool can shoot Lenin's head to pieces, but to create this head anew would be a difficult problem for Nature herself.

But no, he will soon be up again, to think and

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to work, to fight in common with us. In return we promise our beloved leader that as long as any mental power remains in us, and our hearts throb warmly, we shall remain true to the flag of the communistic revolution. We shall fight with the enemy of the working class to the last drop of blood, to our last breath.

## LENIN ILL<sup>1</sup>

COMRADES, this year has put our party to a certain test in regard to clearness of thought and firmness of will. The test was difficult because it was determined by a fact that weighs heavily upon the consciousness of all party members and the broadest circles of the working population—to be more accurate, upon the entire working population of our country and to a considerable degree of the whole world. I speak of Vladimir Ilyich's illness. When a change for the worse took place in his condition in the beginning of March, the political bureau of the Central Committee met to consider what we ought to tell the party and the country about the change in Comrade Lenin's health. I believe you can all imagine, comrades, in what state of mind this session of the bureau took place when we had to give the party and the country this first serious and alarming bulletin. As a matter of course we remained politicians at this moment, too. No one will reproach us for that. We did not think only of Comrade Lenin's health—naturally we were

<sup>1</sup>From a report at the Seventh All Russian Party Conference on April 5th, 1923.

concerned about his pulse, his heart and his temperature—but we also thought what effect the number of his heart-beats would have on the political pulse of the workingmen and the party. With anxiety, but also with deep faith in the strength of the party, we said that we must inform the party and the country as soon as the danger was evident. No one doubted that our enemies would bestir themselves to use this news to confuse the population, particularly the peasants, to start alarming rumors, etc., but also no one doubted for a second that we must tell the party instantly how things were going, because we increase the responsibility of each party member. Our great party embracing half a million is a great community with great experience, but in this half million men Lenin occupies a place that is incomparable. The historical past knows no man who has exerted such influence, not only on the destiny of his own land, but on the destiny of mankind; she has no standard with which to measure Lenin's historical significance. And therefore the fact that he has been separated from the work for a long time, and that his condition is bad, will call forth deep political alarm.

Naturally, naturally, naturally, we know positively that the working class will conquer. We sing: "No higher being saves us"—and also "no

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tribune." That is right, but only in the last historical sense, that is, in so far as the workmen would finally conquer, if there had been no Marx, no Ulianof Lenin. The workmen themselves would have perfected the ideas and methods that they need, but it would have been slower. The circumstance that the working class has produced on both banks of their stream two figures like Marx and Lenin is of great advantage for the revolution. Marx is the prophet with the tables of the law and Lenin the greatest executor of the testament, who not only trained the proletarian aristocracy as Marx did, but trained classes and peoples in the execution of the law, in the most difficult situations, and who acted, manoeuvred, and conquered. This year, in part, we were obliged to do without Lenin in practical work. On ideological ground we have recently received hints and directions from him—about the peasant question, the state apparatus, and the questions of nationality, which will last for years. . . .

And now we were obliged to announce the change for the worse in his health. We asked ourselves in justifiable anxiety what conclusions the neutral masses, the peasant and the red army would form; for the peasant believes in Lenin in the first rank in our state apparatus. Apart from the others Ilyich is a great moral capital of the

state apparatus in the correlations of the workmen and the peasants. Will not the peasant think—many among us asked this question—that Lenin's policy will go through a change in his long separation from the work? How will the party, the masses of workmen, and the whole land react? . . . When the first alarming bulletins appeared, the party united as a whole, grew, and reached a higher moral plane. Naturally, comrades, the party consists of active men, and men have faults and defects and even among the communists there is much that is "human, all too human" as the Germans say, there are conflicts of groups and individuals, serious and incidental, and there always will be, for there is no great party without it. But the moral strength, the political specific gravity of a party is defined by what comes to the top during such tragic experience: the will for unity, discipline, or the incidental and personal, the human, the all too human. And here, comrades, I believe, we can draw our conclusion with absolute certainty: when the party saw that we would be deprived of Lenin's leadership for a long time, it drew together, and put aside everything that threatened the clearness of its thinking, the unity of its will, and its ability to fight.

Before I took my train for Kharkof I spoke with our Moscow commandant, Nicolas Ivano-



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vich Muralof, whom many of you know as an old party comrade, asking how the red army would look upon the situation in connection with Lenin's illness. Muralof said: "At first the news will be like a thunderbolt; they will fall back, and then they will think about Lenin more deeply." Yes, comrades, the neutral red army has now, in its own way, thought deeply over the rôle of personality in history, thought over what we men of the old generation as school boys, as students, or young workmen, studied in books, weighed and debated, in the prisons, and jails, in exile, namely, the relation of the "hero" to the "masses," the subjective factor and the objective conditions, etc. And now, in 1923, our young red army with a hundred thousand heads has thought concretely about this question and along with them the All Russian, the All Ukrainian, and every other kind of peasant with a hundred million heads has thought over the rôle of Lenin's personality in history.

How do our political organs answer this, our commissars, and group secretaries? Their answer is: Lenin was a genius, a genius is born once in a century, and the history of the world knows only two geniuses as leaders of the working class: Marx and Lenin. No genius can be created even by the decree of the strongest and most disciplined party, but the party can try as far as it is possible to make

up for the genius as long as he is missing, by doubling its collective exertions. That is the theory of personality and class which our political organs present in popular form to the neutral red army. And this theory is right: Lenin is not working for the moment and so WE must work doubly as brothers, watch the dangers with double care, guard the revolution from them with double energy, make use of the possibilities of further development with double persistency. And we shall all do this, from the members of the Central Committee to the neutral red army.

Our work, comrades, is very wearisome, very paltry, even if it is carried on in the frame of the large plan; the methods of our work are "prosaic": bookkeeping, calculation, taxation of products and grain export, we do all this step by step, stone on stone. But is there not the danger of the degeneration of the party into the petty? And we can no more permit such degeneration than we can permit even a trifling violation of their unity of action; for even if the present period lasts quite a long time, still it cannot last forever. Perhaps not even long. A revolutionary explosion on a large scale, such as the beginning of a European revolution, may happen sooner than many of us think. If from Lenin's numerous strategic lessons we wish to remember something with especial

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clearness, let it be what he calls the *policy of the great changes*: Today on the barricades and tomorrow in the seat in the Third Duma, today a summons to world revolution, to the international October revolution, and tomorrow negotiations with Kühlmann and Czernin to sign the disgraceful peace of Brest-Litovsk. The situation changed or we believed it changed; the march to the west followed, "to Warsaw!" The situation forced us to change our method; we had to sign the Riga peace, as you all know, just as disgraceful a peace. . . . And then again persistent work, brick upon brick, economy, restriction of the staff, control. Are five or three telephonists necessary? If three are enough, don't take five, because then the peasant must hand over a few more poods of grain. Daily crumbs of petty work, but look, on the Ruhr, the flame of revolution flares up; now, will it find us degenerate?

No, comrades, no! We are not degenerating. We change our methods, ways of working—but the revolutionary instinct of self-preservation of the party is the highest thing for us. We study bookkeeping and at the same time we keep a sharp eye to the east and west and events will not surprise us. By self-cleaning and enlarging of the proletarian basis our strength grows. . . . We will make a compromise with the peasantry and the

little bourgeoisie, we will yield to the Nep<sup>1</sup> people, but we will not allow the Nep people and the little bourgeoisie into the party. No, we will burn them out of the party with sulphuric acid and glowing iron. And at the Twelfth Congress, which will be the first congress since the October revolution without Vladimir Ilyich, and besides one of the few congresses in the history of our party without him, we shall say to each other that we must write or cut with a sharp pencil the chief commands in our consciousness: not to grow hard—consider the skill of the sudden changes, manoeuvre without breaking up the ranks, make a compromise with temporary and lasting comrades, but do not let them into the party. Remain what you are, the advance guard of world revolution! And when the sound of the storm reaches here from the west, and it will resound, then whatever burdens us, bookkeeping, calculation, and Nep, we will answer without hesitation and without delay: We are revolutionaries from head to foot, we were so, we remain so, we shall remain so to the end.

<sup>1</sup> The initials of the New Economic Policy.

## LENIN DEAD

**L**ENIN is no more. We have lost Lenin. The dark laws that govern the work of the arteries have destroyed his life. Medicine has proved itself powerless to accomplish what was passionately hoped for, what millions of human hearts demanded.

How many, unhesitatingly, would have sacrificed their own blood to the last drop to revive, to renew the work of the arteries of the great leader, Lenin—Ilyich, the unique, who cannot be replaced. But no miracle occurred where science was powerless. And now Lenin is no more. These words descend upon our consciousness like gigantic rocks falling into the sea. Is it credible, can it be thought of?

The consciousness of the workers of the whole world cannot grasp this fact; for the enemy is still very strong, the way is long, and the great work, the greatest of history, is unfinished; for the workman class of the world needed Lenin as perhaps no one in the history of the world has yet been needed.

The second attack of illness, which was more

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severe than the first, lasted more than ten months. The arteries "played" constantly, according to the bitter expression of the physicians. It was a terrible play with the life of Lenin. Improvement could be expected, almost complete recovery, but also catastrophe. We all expected recovery, but catastrophe happened. The breathing center of the brain refused to function and stifled the center of that mind of great genius.

And now Vladimir Ilyich is no more. The party is orphaned. The workmen's class is orphaned. This was the very feeling aroused by the news of the death of our teacher and leader.

How shall we advance, shall we find the way, shall we not go astray? For Lenin, comrades, is no longer with us!

Lenin is no more, but Leninism endures. The immortal in Lenin, his doctrine, his work, his method, his example, lives in us, lives in the party that he founded, lives in the first workmen's State whose head he was and which he guided.

Our hearts are now so overcome with grief, because all of us, thanks to the great favor of history, were born contemporaries of Lenin, worked with him, and learned from him. Our party is Leninism in practice, our party is the collective leader of the workers. In each of us lives a small part of Lenin, which is the best part of each of us.



## LENIN THE MAN

How shall we continue? With the lamp of Leninism in our hands. Shall we find the way?—With the collective mind, with the collective will of the party we shall find it!

And tomorrow, and the day after, for a week, a month, we shall ask, Is Lenin really dead? For his death will long seem to us an improbable, an impossible, a terrible arbitrariness of nature.

May the pain we feel, that stabs our hearts each time we think that Lenin is no more, be for each of us an admonition, a warning, an appeal: Your responsibility is increased. Be worthy of the leader who trained you!

In grief, sorrow, and affliction we bind our ranks and hearts together; we unite more closely for new struggles. Comrades, brothers, Lenin is no longer with us. Farewell, Ilyich! Farewell, Leader!

Tiflis Station, January 22nd, 1924.









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